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Teaching visual literacies: The case of The Great American Dust Bowl

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Abstract

Teachers and students require a range of tools to engage with visual texts. Using *The Great American Dust Bowl* by Don Brown (2013) as an exemplar text, we outline four conceptions of visual literacy: rhetorical, instructional, industrial and visuo-spatial and discuss their use in our literacy education practice. In addition, we provide a brief model of a second text, *The Arrival* (Tan, 2013) and a list of suggested texts for students at different levels (elementary, middle, and high school). We argue that these tools have the potential to deepen conceptions of visual literacies and empower teachers and students to understand the many ways in which visual texts operate to send message and evoke response and engagement.

Keywords: Graphic novels, comic scholarship, visual text, visual literacy, *The Great American Dust Bowl*

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Teaching visual literacies: The case of *The Great American Dust Bowl*

Where are your eyes drawn? What stands out to you? When approaching a visual image for the first time with students, our instincts often invite broad questions that draw on students' background knowledge, encouraging a range of interpretations. As former classroom teachers and current literacy teacher educators, we work with teachers to perform visual analysis regularly. The questions above are often the first ones we pose when looking at an image with students for the first time. We recognize that the rhetorical perspective on visual design is a place of comfort and familiarity for educators well-versed in reading images. Yet, this is not the only way to approach and analyze visual texts. In fact, we argue that teachers (practicing and prospective) and students deserve a range of lenses in which to choose, read, and critically respond to visual texts. How else could we appropriately meet the needs of the range of learners that come to us and engage with a range of texts within and outside classrooms? Bitz (2010) writes that "the increasing demand for a workforce and citizenry that is comfortable with multiple literacies, as opposed to one factory model of literacy, is at least one argument for why comics could have a place in an English language arts classroom" (p. 39). We believe that comics serve, not just as complex texts that invite and support multiple literacies, but that comics operate as tools to teach a range of visual literacy skills.

Young people have unprecedented access to technological and media tools that place a wealth of visual images in front of them (Buckingham, 2013). The inundation of media and its capacity for multimodal texts—where messages are comprised of both linguistic and visual images—gives educators both responsibilities and opportunities to help students develop a range of visual literacy skills (Beach & Baker, 2011). The need to develop skills as well as be

recognized as a choice maker in the process of using and creating multimodal texts is at the heart of the multi-literacy movement (Bailey & Van Harken, 2014).

Comics and graphic novels have a valuable place in higher education and within teacher preparation programs (Carter, 2014). Unfortunately, teachers do not receive the instructional support they need in order to make sense of visual texts and support their students in most classrooms (Connors, 2011; Lapp, Wolsey, Fisher, and Frey, 2011/2012). Further, the support to which they do have access often relies on only a few conceptual models, and previously learned teaching and learning strategies (Connors, 2011). Here we describe the ways in which instruction can be built using multiple conceptions of what constitutes high-quality visual text. To do this, we briefly review visual literacy scholarship. Next, we draw on *The Great American Dust Bowl* by Don Brown (2013). Using Brown's text, we outline four conceptions of visual literacy that promote understandings about how visual texts work: rhetorical, instructional, industrial, and visuo-spatial (see Figure 1). Finally, we offer an additional brief example from another text (*The Arrival* [Tan, 2013]) and offer additional suggestions for using the perspectives we present.

Defining and Describing Visual Literacies

Rowsell, McLean, and Hamilton, (2012) defined visual literacy as the ability to make accurate mental models of information and critique the visual expression of other's models of information. These mental models emerge as learners trace threads of meaning through elements of the texts in and outside school, which can result in a number of challenges. We believe learning from visuals in classrooms should be an engaging experience where students can use the skills they may already have as well as develop new ones.

In addition to cognitive processes, social and emotional elements also drive what users of text are willing to think about and the models that they can make when they see an image

(Barthes, 1981). Since the social and emotional are also critical, they must have their place in instructing students about reading and responding to visual images. Further, other elements that are presented in tandem with images, such as text and the readability of that text deserve instructional attention.

The Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, 2010) includes visual literacy skills. For instance, students at all grade levels are tasked with evaluating sources from a variety of texts. Students cannot effectively evaluate many types of texts if they cannot make sense of the graphics, pictures, colors, and shapes. While visual literacy skills have been championed across educational settings (Hug, 2012), many teachers are unsure of whether time should be spent learning to read visual materials.

In addition, several studies suggest that teachers understand the importance of and feel confident in their abilities to use multimodal (including visual) literacies in their classrooms, but they struggle mightily to demonstrate competence in their practice (Hsu, Wang, & Runco, 2013). The teachers (prospective and practicing) in these studies had concerns about teaching visual literacies in what they consider a milieu of political and institutional restriction. However, Siegel (2012) argues that multimodality within a framework of multiliteracies is an important strategy for challenging these constraints.

Visual information is not inherently comprehensible. More often than educators realize, learners are hindered by visual information rather than assisted by it (Cook, 2006; Hannus & Hyona, 1999; Harber, 1983). For example, Schnotz, Picard, and Hron (1993), found learners who were unsuccessful in comprehending text with visual images displayed three patterns: (1) Learners did not look at a visual image in a text presented to them; (2) Learners that did look at the image did not spend enough time to learn from it; (3) Other learners were distracted by the

image and their looking occurred without learning. By contrast, students that were successful at learning from the text with images looked strategically at specific places on visual diagrams and composed mental models to facilitate understanding.

A primary reason why learners struggle to learn from texts with visual images is cognitive load (Cook, 2006). In cognitive load theory, learners have a limited working memory, and visual representations used for instruction should be designed to reduce cognitive load. However, cognitive architecture alone is neither the only factor to be considered nor the most important; individual differences, especially prior knowledge, were also critical in determining the impact a visual representation has on a learners' cognitive structures and processes. These understandings alone offer ample reasons for taking visual image instruction seriously and for considering multiple perspectives on visual design.

The Great American Dust Bowl as a Visual Text Exemplar

We use Don Brown's (2013) *The Great American Dust Bowl* as our central visual text. This nonfiction graphic novel documents the dust bowl era, beginning in 1935. It illustrates weather patterns and tectonic plates, as well as emotional farmers in need of water, settlers pushing American Indians from their land, and the many ways people tried to adapt to the lack of rain. Visually, Brown utilizes water colors and rough, sketched lines, which create familiar images of people, places, and things without detailed features. He also thoughtfully arranges panels, gutters, and pages that meaningfully contribute to the narrative.

We position this eighty-page text as exemplar; it pays careful attention to fact and commentary, while visually and linguistically exploring historical events. Artistic choices made by Brown (2013), including symbolism, use of color and spatial arrangement, and font choices, as well as the direct quotes, maps, and diagrams make this novel a rich one for study. In addition,

this graphic novel has found its way into educational spaces along with many other graphic novels (Abate & Tarbox, 2017; Carter, 2007; Connors, 2017). Because of these strengths, we selected it for demonstrating the analysis using perspectives highlighted in Table 1.

The Rhetorical Perspective

The rhetorical perspective is primarily concerned with purpose and audience. Rather than focusing on one meaning, the emphasis is on how different users make different meanings and how different images convey underlying ideological messages (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996). Comics and graphic novels, in particular, lend themselves to this way of analyzing visuals with young readers (Carter, 2007; Connors, 2011, Author; Pantaleao, 2013; Pantaleao & Bomphray, 2011). Because of the image and text combinations, comics invite multiple ways of interpretation. In turn, this invites readers to be draw on their own understandings in order to make meaning, visually (Carter, 2008; McCloud, 1993).

One striking example from Brown's (2013) graphic novel, *The Great American Dust Bow*l that can help us think through this perspective comes from page 9 (Figure 2). The page, made up of two panels, visually and textually describes the shift in settlers in the Plains. The top panel, which takes up about two-thirds of the page, shows several Native American families standing and watching a hunter chase a bison on horseback seemingly out of the panel. The text above reads "The Indians, the buffalo, the land, and the weather existed in balance for more than a thousand years." The panel is one of the few brightly colored images of the book: the grass is bright and light, the sky has a yellow hue overhead. The image reflects the balance described in the text.

In the panel below, there is mostly grass, which has muddied and darkened. While the panel above easily contained all images (aside from the bison attempting to escape his fate) in

the second panel we see a covered wagon, which protrudes, not only from that panel, but into the one above. The farmhouse in the distance is also drawn on top of the panel, rather than within it. The text described the white settlers "had pushed the Indians into reservations and slaughtered millions of bison." Visually, we see the wagon pushing out and into the upper panel, invading another's land. And the bison, while escaping being hunted, also foreshadows the lack of food and resources to come to the Plains.

There are many ways to read and interpret this page, as we have begun to do above. We can examine historical information, the author's political opinions, or the calling out of white settlers taking land. The placement of each of these panel and the subtle, but clear imagery, including the shift in colors, suggests Brown's intention to illustrate, not only historical information, but causation in the environmental disasters to come. Moving from page to page, a reader might feel tension about the seeming equation of Native Americans to buffalo; yet the term "slaughtered" is only directed towards the buffalo, not the Native American people who were also massacred during this time. It is valuable, especially when reading through a rhetorical perspective, to remember that no text is neutral, and a graphic novel is no different.

To help teachers learn about rhetorical visual grammar, questions such as What commentary is embedded in this image? What is the source or rationale for that commentary? and What do I think about that? become important. On this page, we wonder with our students: What are Brown's opinions about different groups that settled the Plains? and What is the basis for our opinion? Then, we look closer at the placement of the wagon in comparison to the placement of the American Indians and their homes and draw conclusions. We also ask more directly: What statements are being made, not just about environments disasters, but on blame-placing? Asking these questions with preservice teachers draws a critical eye to their own

reading of the word and world. This perspective helps students look at pictures from news sites about current events and critique them, to examining images around local controversies, or even sets of images around local landmarks, festivals, and celebrations.

Using the rhetorical perspective as a teacher requires careful decisions about what images to use and what background knowledge might be required for students to engage with the political and social messages embedded in texts. We recommend collaboratively approaching images through this lens for the first time. It allows the teacher leading to point out strategies students use to make meanings and notice the multiple meanings being produced. Even having conversations about use of color and spatial arrangement will influence how this page is read from a rhetorical perspective. Students might draw on their own perspectives of color and what healthy grass looks like to consider the two panels on page 9.

Kress and Leeuwen (1996) positioned their framework of visual grammar as a concept to think about how systems (in this case, images as visual systems embedded in other visual, social, and political systems) convey meaning. This move beyond meaning to meta-meaning brings critical reading and critical scholarship to the heart of visual image comprehension. It also requires readers to use their knowledge and experiences to read visual texts and their embedded systems. We love to begin examining such images by asking: Where are your eyes drawn? (Author). There are many answers to the question, which can immediately be followed up with Why do you think that is? Regardless of the what and why, this way of asking and answering questions encourages a self-awareness of reading images and the ideas behind them.

The Instructional Design Perspective

The instructional design perspective distinguishes relationships between texts and images. We draw on Mayer's (1993) classification system for instructional images (See Table 2).

This tool was initially designed to evaluate visual materials in print textbooks (Mayer & Gallini, 1990; Stern, Aprea, & Ebner, 2003). However, we believe that understanding a variety of image-text relationships supports teachers and readers beyond evaluating texts. Understanding that there are a variety of image/text relationships is not automatic. But by asking, "Is this image related to the text? ... How?" we aid readers who struggle with using images to support text reading or vice versa Mayer's classifications are decorative, representational, organizational, and explanative, which will be explored in detail below.

The Great American Dust Bowl offers multiple ways to illustrate these classifications. Across pages 44-45 of Brown's (2013) graphic novel is a section of the United States map, which includes the edges of Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas (See Figure 3). Each state is each labeled and drawn as if we are looking up at part of a map from an angle. Where these states merge, the earth lifts into a bowl-shape, and the words Dust Bowl appear, in almost 3D letters. The text reads:

> The worst of the dusters and black blizzards were found in a rough circle covering parts of New Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. The news reported Robert Geiger called it the "Dust Bowl of the continent." The name stuck.

Across the map, which fills both pages, are figures, which include a truck, a house, and cattle. These are what Mayer would call decorative images. Decorative images fill space on the page without enhancing the message of the text. Complex cognitive processes are not associated with this type of visual material. While each of these figures provided context for the space of the dust bowl, they do not support the printed text in any direct ways.

The reading of the map and text is supported by the labeling and drawing of state lines on these pages (44-45). Further, the small, full-sized map of the United States in the upper right

corner also helps readers to visualize and understand where the places listed in the linguistic text exist. These organizational images depict relationships between or among elements. Cognitive processes of selecting and organizing are required to process these images. Readers must do the work of connecting the small US outline with the larger portion of the US map on the pages.

An example of representational images comes from pages 6-7 in *The Great American Dust Bowl*. Representational images portray a single element of the accompanying linguistic passage. For example, there is an image of the world at the top of the page with dotted lines cutting through it, labeled "tectonic plates." Readers of representational images use the cognitive processes of selection to unite the visual dotted lines and the accompanying labeling linguistic material (See Figure 4).

Finally, explanative images bring about the most learning because they require the most types of cognitive processing (Mayer, 1993). They require the selection, organization, and integration of information. Below the image of the world, described above, we see an example illustrating and explaining the creation of the Rockies, due to shifts in plates. In three-paneled successions, readers watch the movement of tectonic plates, the depletion of water, and the rise of the Plains. The linguistic text describes the movement of the plates, name the bodies of water, and explain the changes to the earth's surface in detail.

Each classification has a different purpose and requires different cognitive skills to process. Mayer (1993) found that less than 10 percent of the illustrations in the texts he analyzed were explanative in nature. The highest percentage of illustrations was representational. Although his work argues against word-for-word repetition of information in linguistic text and illustration, Mayer still advocates that visual images and linguistic texts are optimal when they

support one another. Mayer's work demonstrates that visual images in educational textbooks do not all possess the equal potential for helping readers make sense of the image.

Understanding the relationships between images and texts aids in selecting textbooks and other instructional materials for lessons. It also helps learners identify why they are frustrated while trying to make meaning with images that may be only decorative. The notion of relatedness to the text can serve as a valuable tool for helping learners identify why they are frustrated while trying to make meaning with images. Armed with the understanding of these relationships can support readers in meaning-making and acknowledge the variety of choices authors, illustrators, and publishers made with creating a book. As readers consider the work they must do to read and make connections, they might also ask why text and images choices were made and consider how they might improve them.

The Industrial Design Perspective

Teachers quickly become comfortable with the idea of using images when they are related to the linguistic text. But we also want to prepare them to use and learn from images where there is little to no text. The industrial design perspective helps readers to focus on images that are primary in a text, while also attending to elements that make an image attractive to an individual that cannot be quantified. The central relationship in industrial design is between the designer and the user. This concept is represented as a continuum of artificiality (Krippendorf, 2006), which is the degree to which a user of the image can be expected to translate it into something that makes sense in real life. Good industrial designers anticipate how users generally will interact with a design cognitively and emotionally while acknowledging that there will be a range of reactions to their final products.

Malamed (2009) identified six principles for attending to the ways in which users of a visual image might be supported (see Table 3). Her principles are (1) organize for perception, (2) direct the eyes, (3) reduce realism, (4) make the abstract concrete, (5) clarify complexity, and (6) charge it up (do something unexpected for emotional impact). Malamed's principles attend to the context during the creation of the image, which includes what the designer wants to convey, and the capabilities of the media or modality for display.

In using Malamed's principles, readers are allowed to be moved emotionally or sustained intellectually by what they see instead of learning discrete ideas and concepts. A simple exercise where preservice teachers look at infographics, signs, tables, and pictures and then talking about what is interesting or pleasurable and why can start many fruitful conversations around these issues.

Returning to *The Great American Dust Bowl*, the images of the dead cattle on page 11 might be disturbing or evoke sadness. On page 15, the family sitting in muted tones also evokes sympathy as might most of the sad faces in the text. However, the picture of the dirt leaking through the roof on page 35 is more humorous than sad. A man sits in a chair holding the a newspaper below while staring upward. But then, the very next page (36) shows a car driving along a fence with more dead animals lying about. All through the book, there are ample opportunities to feel various emotions and think about which images evoke the strongest emotions and why.

In addition, it is worth considering which images are supposed to be more realistic and which ones are supposed to be more abstract. For example, the image on page 39 depicts large ships sailing through the dusty air. The text description reads: "Enough dust to fill 1,500 modern supertankers blew East." This page is clearly a reduction of realism in order to make a point

about how much dust there really was during the time period. The last page (77) features a renditions of the famous Farmer's Daughter painting by Grant Wood (1930). The original painting of a farmer and his plain daughter is supposed to personify the Great Depression. In Brown's revision, the characters, pitchfork in hand, stare upward at the sky. The text describes subsequent droughts in the area, even after *The Great American Dust Bowl* had officially subsided. The use of these characters clearly symbolizes the downtrodden and the sky's as an antagonist--completely unwilling to cooperate. This way of reading such images invites readers to focus on their emotional connections, rather than the content at hand.

When considering the industrial design perspective in developing lessons and curriculum, the emotional edge moves to the forefront. Questions like "Do I like this image?" "How does this make me feel?" and "Why does this image make me feel this way?" are important for looking at design from this perspective This line of thinking can be applied to any class or subject. For example, a group of social studies teachers could review multiple maps of the United States and then ask the students which one they liked best. In a science class graphics of cellular process, food chains, and carbon cycles might generate the same types of discussion. The learners could then do formal critiques of these images, write plans for improvements, or generate new ones using the elements that will answer the questions they think are important.

The Visuo-Spatial Processing Perspective

Most teachers realize that looking at words requires processing to make meaning, but they do not always realize that how the words are shaped, colored, and laid out requires fundamental visual processing skills. These ideas are crucial in the visual processing perspective (see Table 4).

Individuals looking at the same image will see it differently because our brains are different (Lehmkuhle, Garzia, Turner, Hash & Baro, 1993). The eyes and brain work together to search randomly until they form a spotlight of attention (Treisman, 1988) on some interesting object. During the scanning process, the brain learns about the objects' form, color, depth, motion, and size (Vidyasagar & Pammer, 2010). When individuals have trouble processing images, these delays are caused by the brain's inability to organize what the eyes have seen. Thus, processing deficits are associated with many common types of disabilities such as dyslexia (Casco & Prunetti, 1996; Tallal, 1980). In particular, visual span, or the amount of an image that can be processed has implications for reading (Facoetti, Ruffino, Peru, Paganoni, Chelazzi, 2008). Learners that struggle with visual sequencing, visual discrimination, and visual memory typically have a shorter visual span and thus are often identified as having various types of learning disabilities. Compensating for these visual processing delays requires curriculum modifications as support. Even individuals without disabilities will benefit from learning from images that are less dense,

The visuospatial framework represents the bare minimum of what teachers can do as they think about which visual images to select for classroom use or to troubleshoot about reasons why students would not be successful in learning from a visual image. Perhaps the image is not large enough for all to see. Perhaps it is too busy to make sense of, or the colors or shapes are distracting. van Garderen and Whittaker (2006) offered practical examples of how to incorporate visual-processing in a class with students who have specific learning disabilities. They advocated for lesson designs that attend to the size and number of visuals and allow for individuation in visual presentation. For example, they said that visual materials should be made available in both black and white and color and learners should be able to change all fonts and image sizes.

The visual processing perspective highlights the need to assist users of visual images by displaying them as plainly as possible. It is also necessary to minimize the use of images with multiple small elements that clutter together. Finally, images in a visual field should be immediately relevant to the content of the message. While these principles certainly apply to anything that would enter a person's visual field, it is particularly the case when reading on a computer screen since reading from a computer screen is more taxing on the eyes than reading a regular page (Chu, Rosenfield, Portello, Benzoni, & Collier, 2011). Learners with many types of disabilities rooted in visual processing will process the screen image even more slowly.

In the case of The Dust Bowl, there are subtle font changes. On page 11 (as well as others) Brown used one font for the narration and a slightly different one when people are talking. Some readers may miss this detail because their brains are not attuned to focus on the difference, but if a teacher pointed it out, they might see this. After this detail is noticed, it is important to think about why the decision was made to make the fonts different. However, if students do not even realize there is such a difference, or they cannot tell the difference, they cannot engage in what are considered higher order processes.

There are also places in the text where the font is distorted or difficult to read. On pages 26-27, the font is swirled into the dust as it blows through the page. On page 47, part of the text is white on a black background and then less than an inch down, there is black text on a white background and remember, the font is slightly different. Some students will be able to read the black/white contrasts easier than others.

Images are also distorted. One example is on page 21, where there is a silo that is very small and very dark in the bottom-left corner. Another example is of page 25 where the dust is covering a man carrying a candle and his outline becomes gradually fainter. Of course, this is the

point--to use visual images to give the sense that the dust has greatly reduced visibility. However, some students are better positioned to see and process these details than others.

The final piece of helping teachers learn to use this perspective is to suggest ways that they can equip the children they will teach to engage visuals. For example, teachers can learn to help students advocate for themselves with questions like: How can I change this image to help me learn from it best? As additional practice, teachers can show students how to manipulate objects on screens, how to block off information with paper as a mask on printed pages or overlay plastic sheets to reduce visual noise.

Final Thoughts

Frameworks from any of these perspectives (or combinations thereof) might be very helpful to offer educators rich curricular opportunities to support the development of visual literacy skills. However, much of what is available for thinking about visual images was developed in various disciplines for adult readers. Therefore, allowances and consideration have to be made when thinking about how to support prospective and practicing teachers' work with children of various ages engage with visual literacies. Those allowances include using age-appropriate materials, using looping strategies that revisit visual literacy concepts multiple times, and thinking about children's logic patterns. What looks good to young people and how they feel about it may differ from adult norms, which means that comics must be integrated more fully into classrooms, rather than a one-time unit at some point during the year (Carter, 2008). In addition, these patterns and preferences may change during a school year. Just as we have done here, we recommend teaching and engaging with these visual designs alongside texts like *The Great American Dust Bowl*. While we found that comics have much to offer by way of exploring

and learning visual design concepts, there are many other texts and mediums that can support readers' engagement in visual literacy processes.

One such example is *The Arrival* (Tan, 2006). In the novel, a man—The Arrival—leaves his family and immigrates to a new land—one whimsically and fancifully illustrated to be placeless, while evoking a strong sense of place. As an Arrival, he works to meet new people, find work, food, and a place to live safely in the hopes of eventually bringing his family to his new country. This wordless graphic novel offers opportunities to demonstrate the range of pedagogical possibilities that emerge from engaging with the various frameworks and serves as a text that can illicite engagement in ways that compliment and contrast work with *The American Dust Bowl*. Further, it is a text that is accessible to a range of readers in elementary to university settings. Table 5 offers questions that would engage students in the various frameworks of visual analysis.

We believe there are many ways we as teacher educators can engage with visual design—whether drawing from a single perspective or multiple ones. Our on-going work is to include these ideas in our university-level teacher education courses so that teachers can, in turn, use these activities and questions with students in their classrooms. Other teacher educators might design protocol or procedures students could use to interview each other about how they interpret images in *The Great American Dust Bowl* or a similar text. Students could even be involved in the design of such an assignment. Through considering different backgrounds, colors, and font sizes for conveying a message with various combinations of texts and words, students could also explore their own creations and compositions together. Students can also view a variety of versions of certain texts and identify which are easier to read while discussing why that might be the case.

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Drawing on texts outside the classroom, students might locate images of the same news event and talk about which image represents the event more effectively. Teacher educators could ask which images elicit stronger emotional reactions (sadness, anger, laughter). Inviting students to look up images in textbooks and identify which images are linked closely to the text and which are merely decorative is another way to empower them to critique and ultimately understand their school resources more deeply. Students could then design new visual material where decorative images appear, even using the visuo-spatial guidelines as a model. Taken together these activities support students in taking ownership over the meaning they make from text while also engaging in disciplined and systematic critique. Table 6 offers suggestions for graphic novels for elementary, middle, and high school students that would make excellent choices for these types of analyses.

In sum, educators desiring to make use of visual design tools should consider how visual images contribute to their other learning goals and what materials they have access to when planning instruction. There is no expectation (from these authors, at least) that visual design perspectives should remain locked into their own disciplinary categories, either. Remixing and repurposing the tools in the various frameworks offer genuine opportunities for invention in classroom spaces. In addition, there are cultural considerations for reading comics produced in different countries, which we had not explored here (Cohn, 2013). Using visual tools designed explicitly to instruct students on visual literacy can provide opportunities for rich and meaningful curriculum that supports a range of readers and texts.

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Table 1

Characteristics of profiled perspectives on visual design

Perspective (Developers)	Pedagogical Questions	Strengths	Weaknesses
Rhetorical (Semiotic linguistics)	What commentary is embedded in this image? What is the source or rationale behind that commentary? What do I think about that?	Emphasizes multiple meanings; encourages use of metacognitive skills like inference and connection	Requires background knowledge to make multiple meanings; concepts may require simplification of some definitions.
Instructional Design (Educational Psychologists)	Is this image related to the text? How?	Focuses on learning from image; highlights relationships between image and linguistic text.	Privileges relationships between image and text; validity not rigorously tested with adolescents.
Industrial Design (Industrial Designers)	How do I feel when I look at this? What does this image help me understand/do?	Validates designer goals; concerned about visual processing	Inattentive to exceptional users; certain aspects are vaguely defined
Visuo-spatial (Neuroscientists)	How can I change this image to help me learn best?	Focuses on exceptional users, including adolescents; highly specific	Leaves little room for user interpretation; highly prescriptive

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Table 4

Varying levels of attention to visuo-spatial processing

	Optimal	Minimal	Negligible
Scope	Main topic with 2-2 subtopics.	Main topic with more than 2-3 subtopics.	Many topics and subtopics.
Size	Image contained on one screen, rather than multiple and is at least four inches wide.	Image contained on one screen, rather than multiple; may require users to scroll around on screen but is at least four inches wide.	Image contained on multiple screens, or requires users to scroll around on screen, and/or is less than four inches wide.
Density	Objects within image are distinctive and essential to the overall image.	Objects within image clutter in the space of the image but are essential to overall image.	Objects within the image clutter together in the space of the image and are non-essential to overall image.
Formal consistency	Distinctions between objects made with sharp, straight lines and dark colors, rather than slanted or curved lines or lighter hues. Patterns of presentation consistent throughout the image.	Distinctions between objects made with sharp, straight lines and dark colors, rather than slanted or curved lines and lighter hues, but patterns of presentation inconsistent throughout image.	No discernable distinctions made between objects; patterns of presentation inconsistent throughout the image.
Importance	Image essential to comprehending linguistic text.	Image related to linguistic text.	Image has no discernable instructional purpose.

Table 2
Meyer's (1993) Classification of Images in Instructional Materials

Type of illustration	Function	Cognitive processes
Decorative	Fill space on a page	None
Representational	Depict single elements	Selection
Organizational	Demonstrate relationships	Selection, Organization
Explanative	Elucidate a system	Selection, Organization, Integration

Table 3
Malamed's (2009) Principles of Industrial Visual Design

Principle	Description
Organize for perception	Prominent features obvious; textures separate ideas; objects logically grouped.
Direct the eyes	Objects positioned strategically; emphasis correctly placed; movement depicted when necessary; eye gaze exploited; visual cues present.
Reduce realism	Visual noise eliminated; silhouettes employed when possible; easily recognized symbols used; line art present where applicable; quantity of objects not overwhelming.
Make the abstract concrete	Big picture views offered, data displays describe phenomena; information displays relationships; maps adhere to convention; timelines adaptable to different time conceptions (linear, cyclical, and spiral).
Clarify complexity	Explanations presented as segments and sequences; focus on clarity rather than simplicity; inherent structures, such as hierarchy developed.
Charge it up	Emotionally salient material managed; narratives enhance illustrations; visual metaphors comprehensible; novelty and humor appropriately employed.

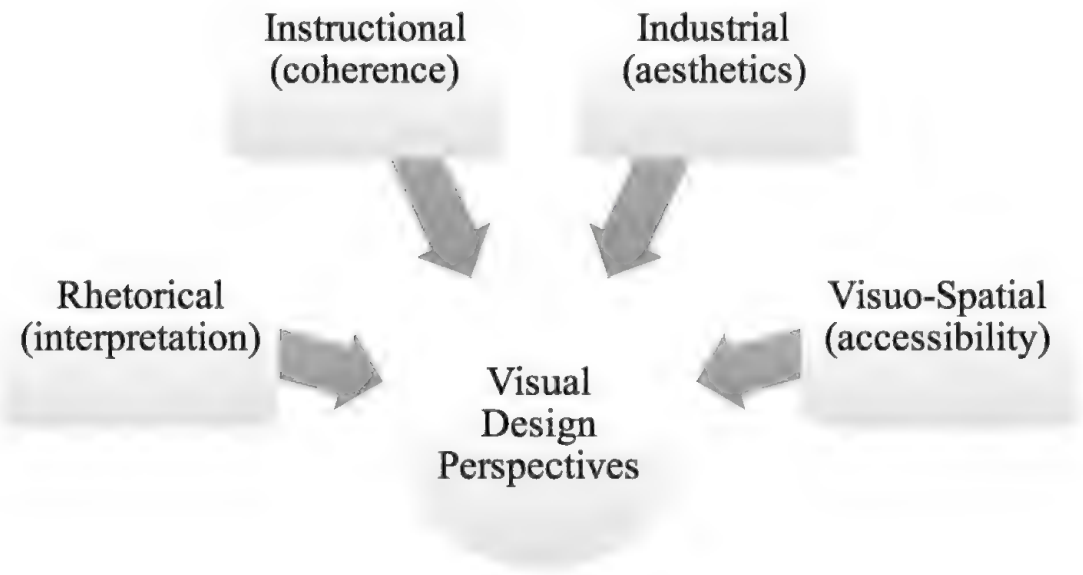

Figure 1.
Visual design perspectives for analyzing comic images

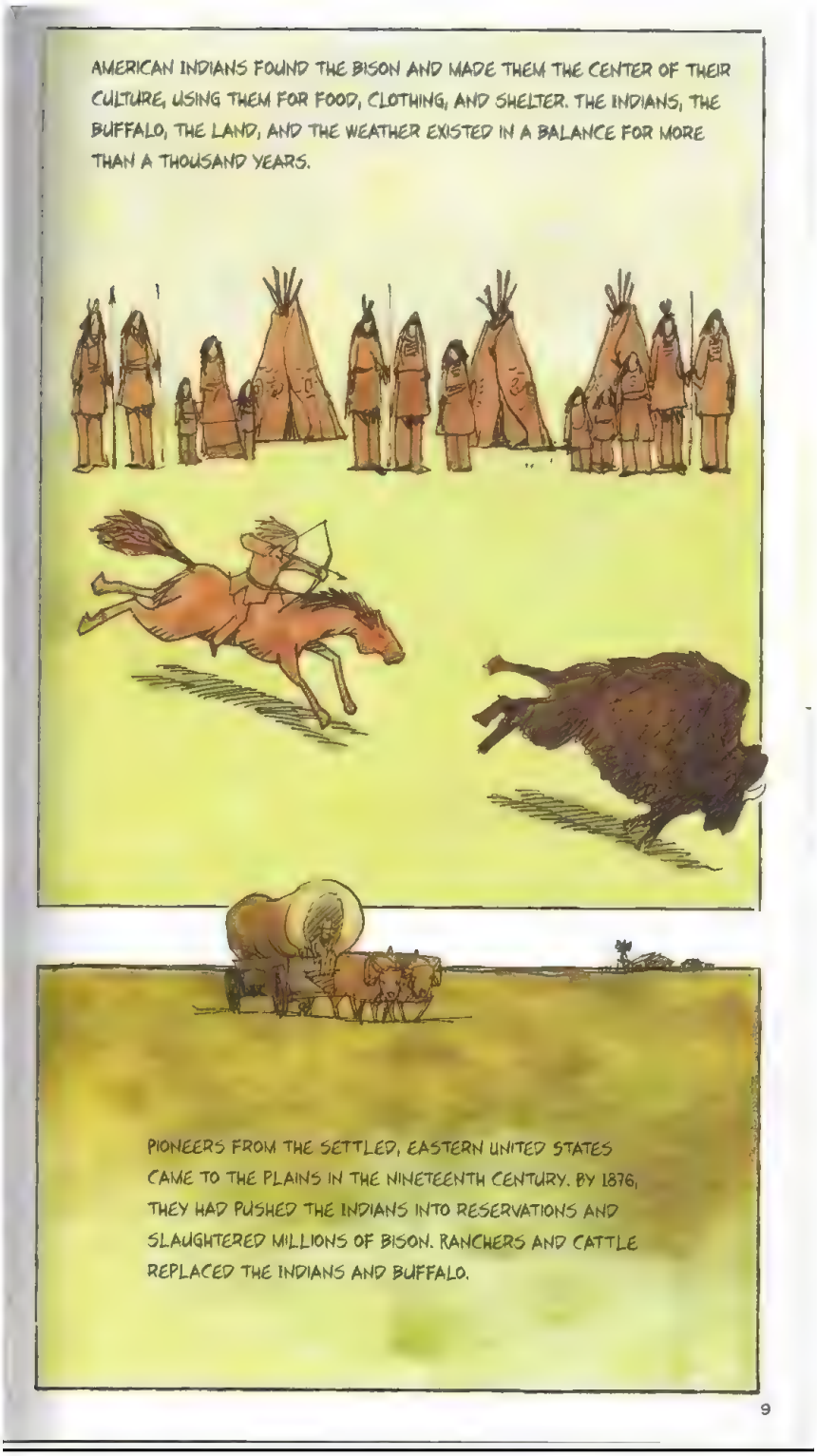
AMERICAN INDIANS FOUND THE BISON AND MADE THEM THE CENTER OF THEIR CULTURE, USING THEM FOR FOOD, CLOTHING, AND SHELTER. THE INDIANS, THE BUFFALO, THE LAND, AND THE WEATHER EXISTED IN A BALANCE FOR MORE THAN A THOUSAND YEARS.
PIONEERS FROM THE SETTLED, EASTERN UNITED STATES CAME TO THE PLAINS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. BY 1876, THEY HAD PUSHED THE INDIANS INTO RESERVATIONS AND SLAUGHTERED MILLIONS OF BISON. RANCHERS AND CATTLE REPLACED THE INDIANS AND BUFFALO.
9

Figure 2.
Depictions of settlers

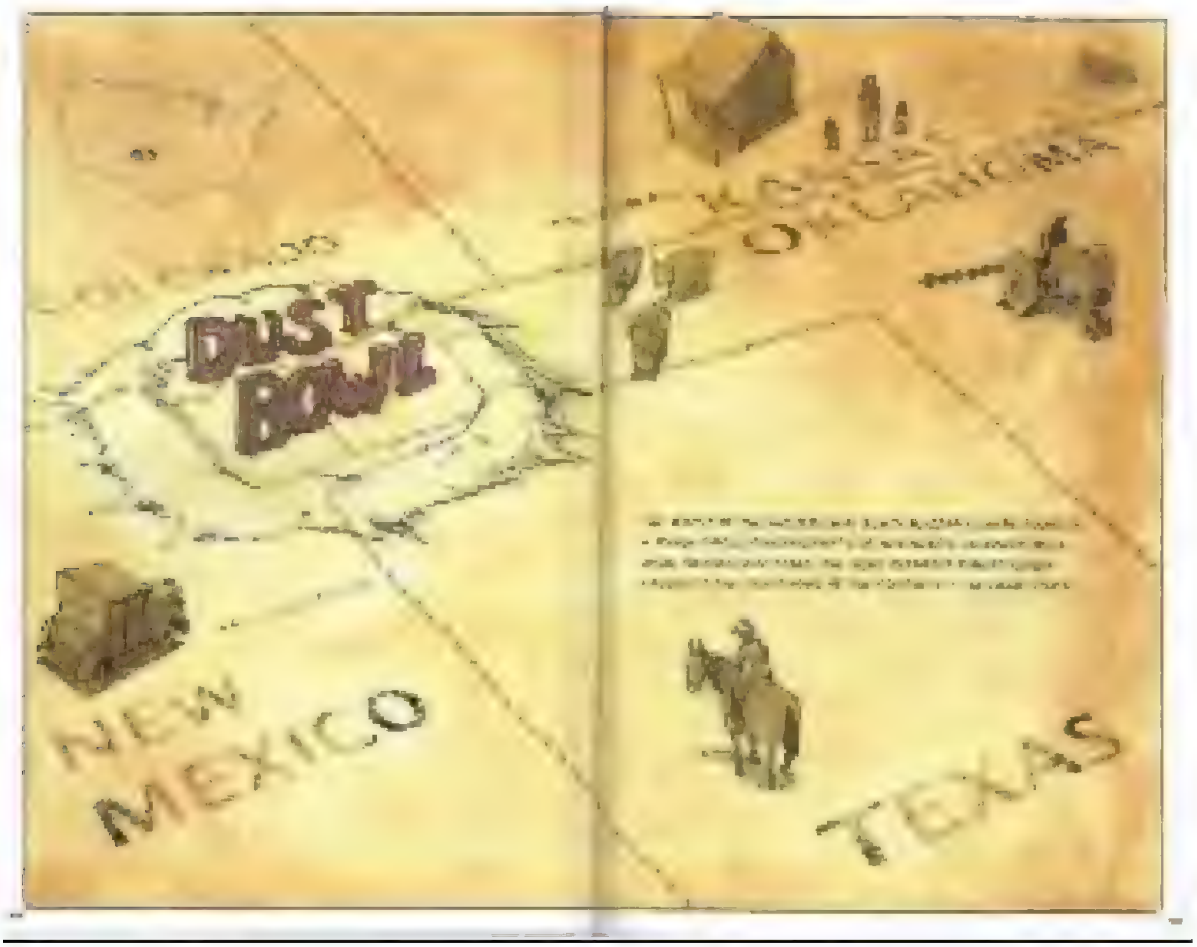

Figure 3.
Map of the dust bowl

Figure 4.
Embeded informational text

Table 5
Questions for Analysis of The Arrival (Tan, 2013).

Visual Perspective	**Starter Pedagogical Questions**
Rhetorical	What are the underlying assumptions about immigrants and immigration in this book?
Instructional	The language in this book has been designed to mimic the experience of seeing a language one does not understand. What words do you imagine the various signs and documents would say, given the visual information?
Industrial	What elements of text do you think are supposed to make you feel empathy for the immigrant? Are they successful at making you feel empathy?
Visuo-Spatial	Choose a page of the book. Is this page busy with images or does it only have a few? Are there any images on the page that are too small or too dark to understand? What would help you access all the parts of all the images better?

Table 6
Suggested Additional Reading

Suggested Comic Reading
Elementary School
Aguirre, J. A., & Rosado, R. (2012). *Giants beware!* New York, NY: First Second.
Camper, C., & Gonzalez, R. (2014). *Lowriders in space*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books
Staake, B. (2013). *Bluebird*. New York, NY: Schwartz & Wade Books.
Middle School
Bell, C. (2014). *El Deafo*. New York, NY: Amulet Books.
Brown, D. (2015). *Drowned city: Hurricane Katrina & New Orleans*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
Stevenson, N., Ellis, G., Allen, B., & Watters, S. (2015). *Lumberjanes*. Los Angeles, CA: BOOM! Box.
Wicks, M. (2015). *Human body theater*. New York, NY: First Second.
High School
Leatherdale, M. B., & Charleyboy, L. (2017). *#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American women*. Toronto, CAN: Annick Press Ltd.
Lewis, J., Aydin, A., & Powell, N. (2013). *March (books one, two, and three)*. Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions.
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Film on Paper, Graphics on Screen, Feminism in Story: An Exegesis of a Feminist Graphic Novel Project

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Film on Paper, Graphics on Screen, Feminism in Story: An Exegesis of a Feminist Graphic Novel Project

Cover Page Footnote
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor William Bardebes for his continuous and dedicated instruction during the journey of my practice-based research. Undoubtedly, it is impossible for my project to go on wheels without his professional supervision and urge. Numerous weekly discussions with William were not just a mechanism to propel my project towards the proposed goals, but also an incubator where inspirations were burst out. We went through a lot, from storyline to character's arc, from image-making to colour use, from character's speech to lettering, from book cover design to opening title composition, and from insights to communication. Then, the project was baked. More importantly, I developed my creative practice techniques and theoretical knowledge during the iterative process. This unforgettable study experience will be beneficial to my future art and design career.

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FILM ON PAPER, GRAPHICS ON SCREEN, FEMINISM IN STORY:

AN EXEGESIS OF A FEMINIST GRAPHIC NOVEL PROJECT

JINGWEI XU

FILM ON PAPER, GRAPHICS ON SCREEN, FEMINISM IN STORY:

AN EXEGESIS OF A FEMINIST GRAPHIC NOVEL PROJECT

ICIB8007 Creative Practice Project Assignment 1

JINGWEI XU
1502041
POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN CREATIVE PRACTICE
2019

Acknowledgements

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Research Question

How do I communicate my interpretation of feminism and my main claims about the awakening of female subject consciousness by a graphic novel combined with a title sequence?

Abstract

This research is the second stage of my entire graphic novel practice looking at a feminist topic – women's awakening from marriage. In this phase, the study carries out the practical process of the creative work, involving a graphic novel (body), an opening title (hook) and a package of visual communication design (promotion), in order to convey my feminist claim that women's real emancipation depends on whether they can rouse their subject awareness and break through the chain of marriage. Based on this practice-led research, my personal knowledge is generated, including the value of combining graphic novels and title sequences, the importance of symbolic storytelling and my understanding of female subjective freedom. In addition, this research potentially provides an arts-based research method, which can enable practitioner/researcher to utilise a reflective triangle model to develop art and design work.

The Storyline

Twenty-five

Coral (the main character) is a housewife living with her husband Bernard and their children – a pair of twins (a boy and a girl). Every day she takes in charge of all house chores as well as looking after their children, and she enjoys this work and feels happy with her marriage-and-family life as well. However, Coral recently has been struggling with a nightmare, in which a long-dark-haired girl is imprisoned in a cage around by a number "25" and suddenly she finds that the girl in the cage becomes herself. Meanwhile, Coral accidentally identifies something wrong in her surroundings, such as her necklace and earrings totally the same as other housewives'. After seeing a doctor with her husband, she recalls all the truth of her past: In reality, Coral was Cory, the girl in cage in her dream, who was a celibatarian and compelled to get a special medical treatment by this doctor, owing to the new radical policy by the authorities that all women must get married before twenty-five years old, and then, Cory was modified to Coral, a very obedient and nice lady, and married with Bernard. Then Coral passes out. To stop Coral waking up, the doctor persuades Bernard to accept a brain procedure, but Bernard changes his mind and stops the surgery just before its starting, because he wants to keep Coral's memories with him and their children. At the end, Coral is awake and her consciousness has returned to Cory. Bernard tries to request Coral to stay by highlighting their conjugal emotion and her kinship with their children, yet, awakened Coral still leaves the house – the forced marriage and family – after a short hesitation, and is going to seek her true life.

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Introduction

This exegesis articulates the practical stage of my arts-based research project – a feminist graphic novel, which has been commenced and completed based on my previous exploration on the topic of feminism and the form of graphic novels theoretically and practically. This phase's goal is to synthesise and generate this graphic novel that can communicate my understanding of feminism and visual storytelling. It is significant to examine this practice since my personal knowledge can develop through the analysis. This essay firstly contextualises the project, involving the scope of study, research question and methodology, then lays out the process of the creative practice, inclusive of a graphic novel, an opening title and relevant visual communication design, and finally discusses the findings from three perspectives of combinatory form, symbolic storytelling and reflective ideas.

The Context

Research Domain

This project looks at how I compose a graphic novel to convey female awakening from marriage.

The theme of women waking up from their gilded but fake marriage, generated from the topic of female self-consciousness awakening from covert oppression, is a vital but often neglected feminist concern. It is true that the concept of marriage has been moralised and beatified since it was born, thereby, marriage, especially so-called perfect marriage, can be a weapon of oppression of women. Marriage, as de Beauvoir (1949/2010) argues, is a vehicle that has been being used for reinforcing the male dominance. Yet, it seems to be rarely realised by people especially women. So it is very essential to look into this social issue.

To achieve that, it seems to me that a graphic novel is an effective way, due to its visual storytelling ability. Graphic novels, as a branch notion of comics (Duncan & Smith, 2009), can immerse readers in a story by means of making sequential images "to represent a person, place, thing or idea" (McCloud, 1993, p. 27). Therefore, it is possible to communicate ideas between creators and readers. Meanwhile, attaching an opening title (video) to this graphic novel (book) can boost the value and influence of communication at the digital age. This mixture of two sorts of media (print and screen) can be considered as an attempt to construct a new vehicle to express insights and define a new aesthetic form as well. After all, "graphic designers have an obligation to contribute to the public understanding of environmental and social issues" (Meggs & Purvis, 2012, p. 572).

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Research Question

At previous stage, the research question was set up as below:

> ***How do I communicate my interpretation of feminism and my main claims about the awakening of female subject consciousness by a graphic novel combined with a title sequence?***

A personal solution to this question, developed from last research phase, is a process in which my learning from feminism and visual narratives evolves into a graphic novel that implies my feminist ideas under a story (Fig. 1).

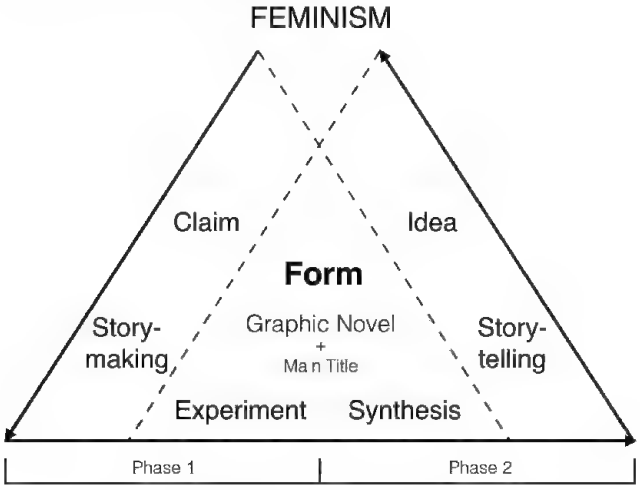

Fig. 1: The project solution triangle [updated version] (Xu, 2019) [1]

According to this solution triangle, the research at this stage focuses on creating the form – a graphic novel with a main title. So, the research is shifted to the practical direction, looking at how I develop a graphic novel, based on previous outcomes such as my claim, the storyline and the visual experiment, to embody my ideas in relation to feminism.

[1] This is a renewed version to make echoes between each side (e.g. claim-ideas, storymaking-storytelling), whereas the previous one indicates ambiguous information (Fig. 2).

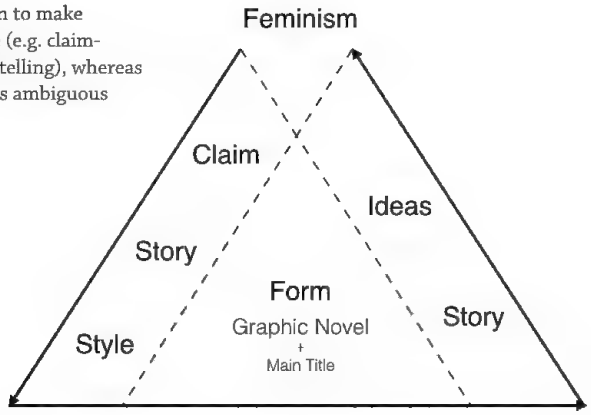

Fig. 2: The project solution triangle [first version] (Xu, 2018)

Research Methods

- **Theories**

My research at this stage employs action research, grounded theory, visualising research and semiotics. Action research "helps you as a practitioner to develop a deep understanding of what you are doing as an insider researcher" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010, p. 19). Grounded theory enables me as a researcher to collect rich data rooted in these data themselves and everything that I learn in my studies can be seen as data (Charmaz, 2006). Visualising research assists me in visualising gathered data so that these data can become visual elements in the graphic project. Besides, Peirce's semiotics is an additional vital method applied to the process of making meanings in my project. Just as Chandler (2001) has explained, in Peirce's semiotic theory, the meaning of a sign does not arise until it is interpreted. In brief, in this phase, the research is carried out in action, in which new knowledge and theories are developed by constantly gathering uncontaminated data that are visualised and interpreted with meanings.

- **Techniques**

Based on those theories above, this research project is put into practice by using comics making rules, motion graphic design laws and visual communication design principles. While for the body (graphic novel), this project employs five basic choices of moment, frame, image, word and flow (Fig. 3) in order to achieve a goal of clear and convincing storytelling (McCloud, 2006, p. 10), for the opening title, this research utilises motion design methods, such as developing ideas, creating motion, composing and editing (Krasner, 2008). Moreover, basic graphic design techniques are applied to the section of visual communication for branding and diffusing this graphic novel project.

CHOICE OF MOMENT
CHOICE OF FRAME
CHOICE OF IMAGE
CHOICE OF WORD
HEY!
CHOICE OF FLOW
THESE ARE THE FIVE ARENAS WHERE YOUR CHOICES CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CLEAR, CONVINCING STORYTELLING AND A CONFUSING MESS.
CHOICE OF MOMENT
CHOICE OF FRAME
CHOICE OF IMAGE
CHOICE OF WORD
CHOICE OF FLOW
10

Fig. 3: The five choices for clarity communication in making comics (McCloud, 2006)

- **Tools**

More specifically, Adobe Creative Suite, like Photoshop, Illustrator, After Effects and Audition, and Wacom Tablet are indispensable and professional devices for launching the practice. By and large, Photoshop and Wacom Tablet mainly serve the graphic novel's creation, while After Effects and Audition are the vehicle of the title design and Illustrator is mostly used for communication design.

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The Practice

The practice of this research was divided into three major parts, involving a graphic novel (body), a main title (hook) and the visual communication (promotion). The three parts were commenced alternatively as well as overlapping with one another.

Graphic Novel

- **Storyboard revision**

Before launching the graphic novel creation, I revised the storyboard particularly in relation to the story arc and the character's emotional transformation.

For one thing, the section of climax (Chapter 4) in this story was expanded from 8 pages to 22 pages and accordingly from 56 pages to 84 pages for the entire story (Fig. 4 & 5). This facilitated to highlighting the conflicts between characters and make the story go reasonably as well. In this process, I invoked the five-choice rules, including moment decision, frame setting and panel layout, to visualise the supplemental parts. Consequently, more details were installed in each chapter to plump the whole story.

Fig. 4: The storyboard [first version] (Xu, 2018)

For another, to shape a convincing main character Coral/Cory, I inserted a couple of pages at the ending part to create a signal of her hesitation when she was required by her husband Bernard to stay for their children (Fig. 6). Similarly, the character Bernard was designed to change his mind and want to keep Coral's memories just before the operation on Coral by the doctor (Fig. 7). This setting for Bernard's emotional arc replaced the previous idea that made the

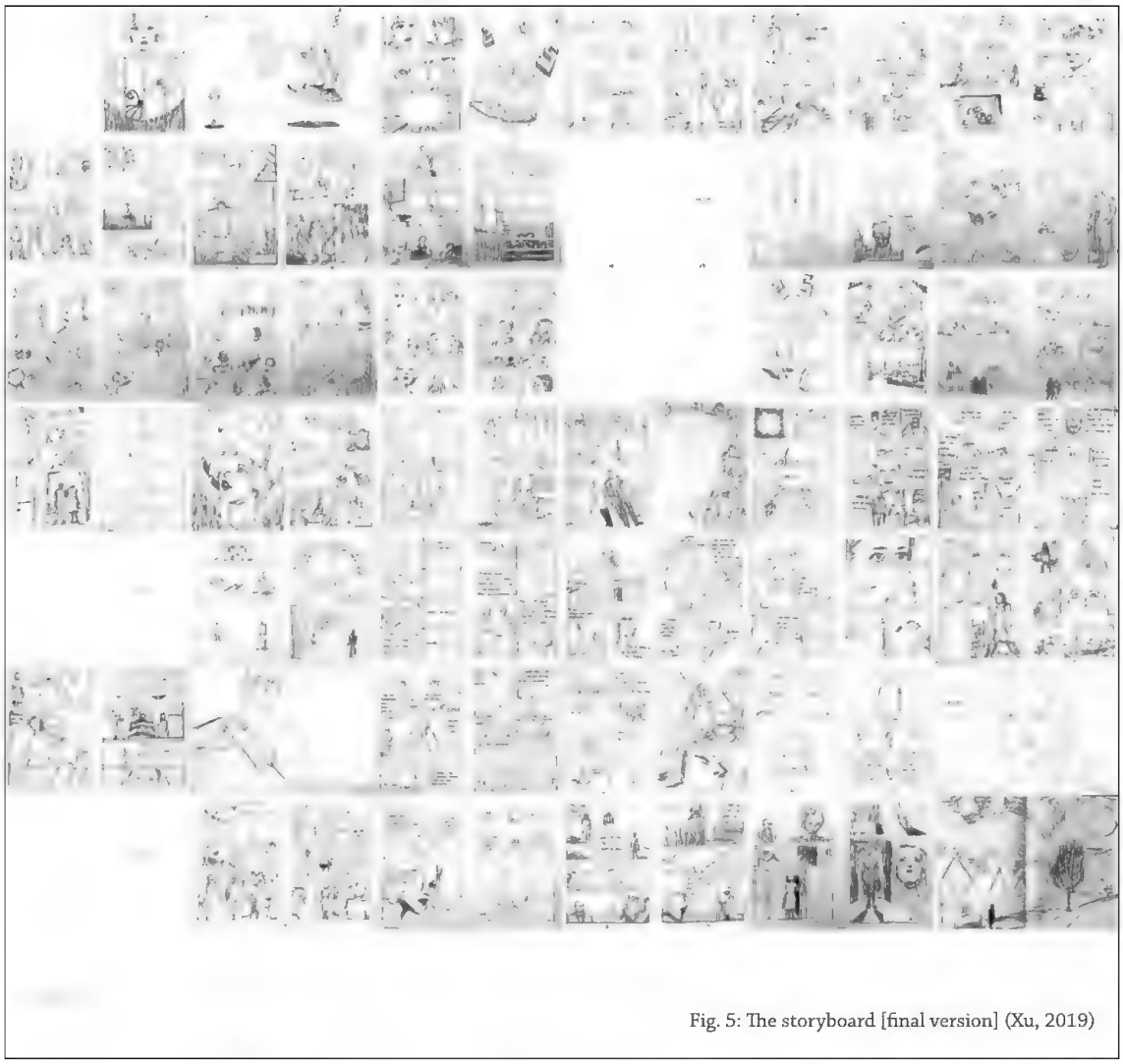

Fig. 5: The storyboard [final version] (Xu, 2019)

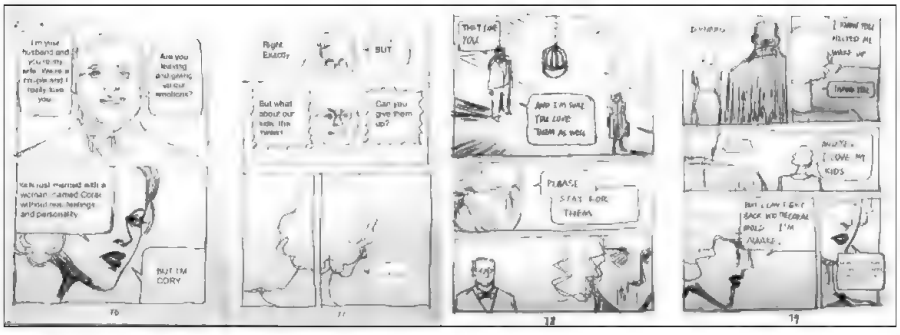
I'm your husband and you're my wife. We're a couple and I really love you.
Are you leaving and going without emotions?
But I'm sorry
Right. Exactly.
But
But what about our kids. I'm sorry!
Can you give them up?
THAT'S FOR YOU
AND I'M SURE THE LOVE THEM AS WELL
PLEASE STAY FOR THEM
I LOVE MY KIDS
BUT I CAN'T GET BACK MY FEMALE AND I'M MALE.

Fig. 6: Coral's hesitation (Xu, 2019)

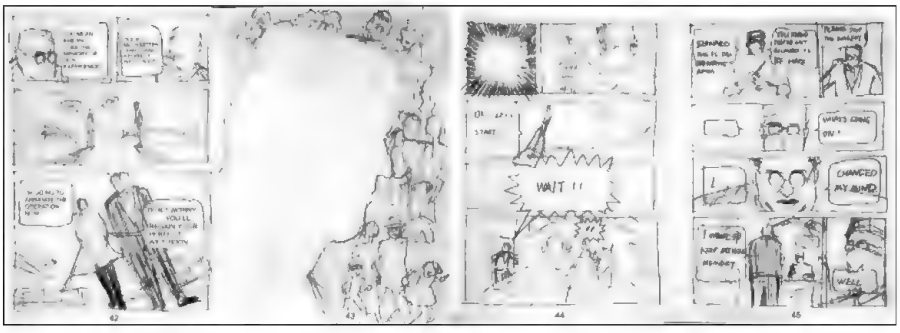

Fig. 7: Bernard's hesitation (Xu, 2019)

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doctor conceive the motivation to help Coral wake up (Fig. 8), which seemed to be farfetched. After all, the doctor is designed in this story as a representative of male power. Male power, according to Foxhall & Salmon (1998), "frequently includes the control of specific women whose associated submission manifests, symbolizes and highlights male superiority" (pp. 4-5).

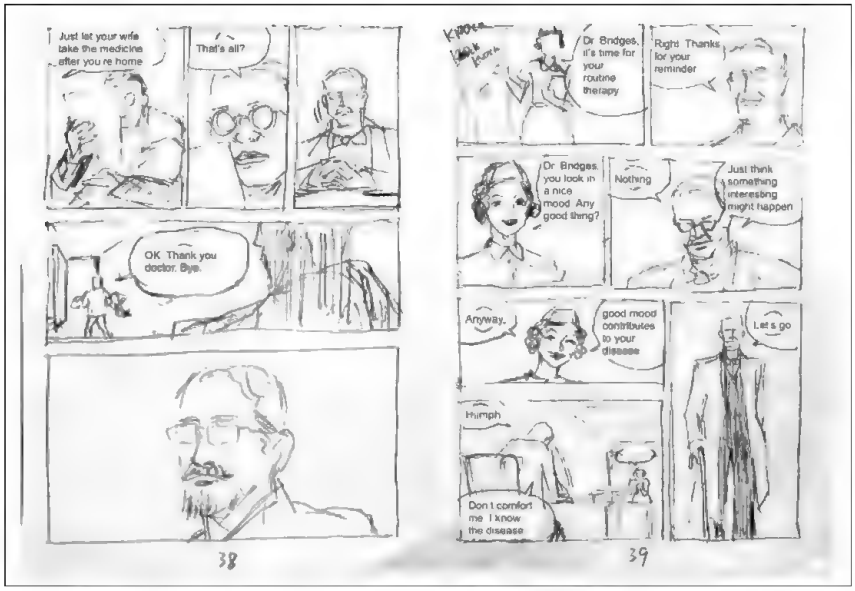

Just let your wife take the medicine after you re home
That's all?
OK. Thank you doctor. Bye.
38
Dr Bridges, it's time for your routine therapy
Right. Thanks for your reminder
Dr Bridges, you look in a nice mood. Any good thing?
Nothing
Just think something interesting might happen
Anyway.
good mood contributes to your disease
Let's go
Hmph
Don't comfort me. I know the disease
39

Fig. 8: Dr Bridges' motivation (Xu, 2018)

It should be noted that the main character Coral (awake) still goes for leaving her conjugal family at the end even though her husband resorts to the parent-child relationship. It seems to me that this decision designed for Coral is a critical point, which differentiates women who are likely to become an independent subject and those who are still stuck in the trap built by a cosy illusion of marriage. After all, "marriage chains her to a man and makes her mistress of a home" (de Beauvoir, 1949/2010, p. 507), though this idea seems inevitably controversial.

- **Colouring test**

It is essential to test colouring within my project that I did not go through previously, as obviously colour is in a vital place in comic art. McCloud states (1993) that colour as "a central role" can "express a dominant mood" and help build "depth" and "scenes" (p. 190). In consequence, I tested two colouring types on two drawing styles respectively, resulting in four visual effects in this phase (Fig. 9, 10, 11 & 12).

After comparison, I got the final choice of style and colouring system: the line drawing with appropriate dark shapes and shades and full flat colour (Fig. 9). As clearly shown in Fig. 9, the mixture of modelling genre and colouring style depicts abundant details and emotional tones, which can contribute to the germination of a compelling visual storytelling. In contrast, the one of full colour on dark-shape drawing in Fig. 10 lacks of character's facial expressions, although it offers an intense visual sensation. With respect to the two other experiments through light blue and red colour, their underweight visual effects are not likely to load the intricate storytelling (Fig. 11 & 12).

In terms of the colour system in Fig. 7, it evolved from Chris Ware's colouring style. I researched into his colour use in *Building Stories* (Fig. 13) and *Heads or Tails* (Fig. 14), demonstrating a soften primary hue, then I extracted several colours and combined them with my bold-shade drawing, and then got the final result.

Fig. 9: Colouring test [full colour on line drawing] (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 10 Colouring test [full colour on dark-shape drawing] (Xu, 2019)

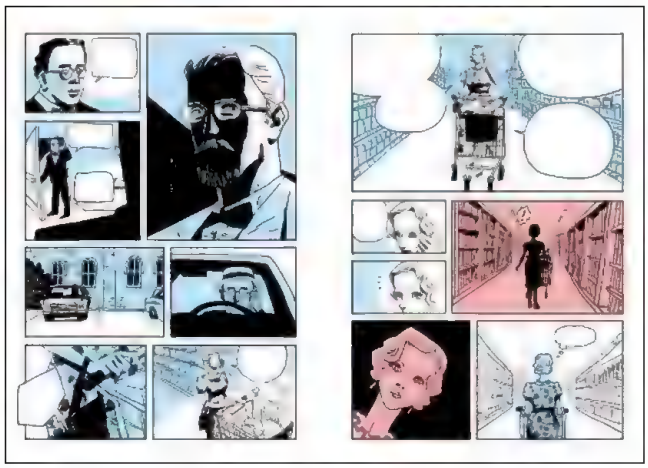
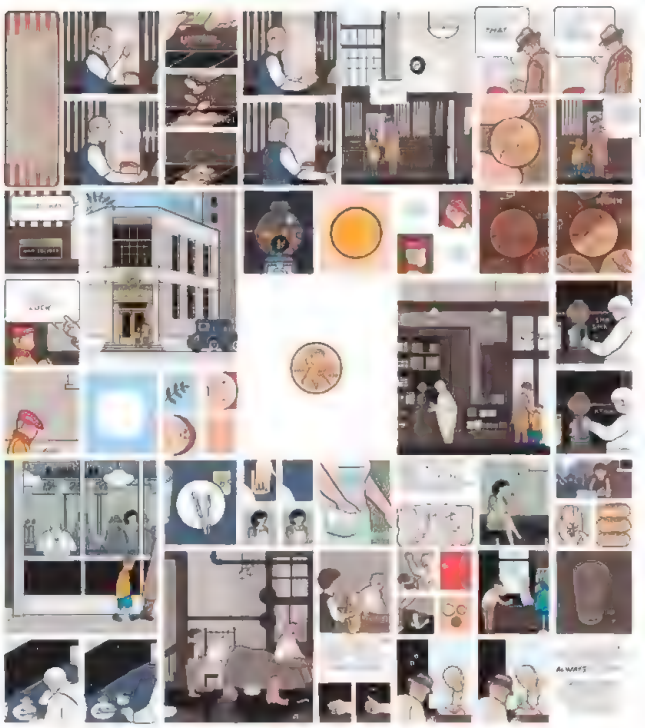


Fig. 11: Colouring test [two colour on line drawing] (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 12: Colouring test [two colour on dark-shape drawing] (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 13: *Building Stories* (Ware, 2012)

Fig. 14: *Heads or Tails* (Ware, 2014)



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- **Finished art**

After storyboard and colouring style got set, I started to execute the finished hand-draw work on Photoshop. It was broken up into four steps – setting, inking, colouring and lettering, in which I installed a semiotic model stemmed from Peircean semiotics (Fig. 15) in order to enable visual signs to signify specific meanings in line with the feminist theme.

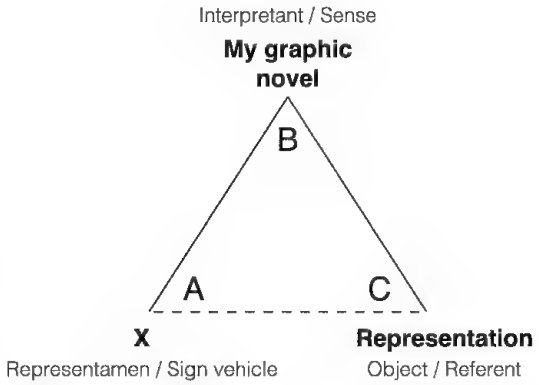


Fig. 15: The application of Peircean semiotic model to my project (Xu, 2018)

o Setting

To start with, I built a page in A4 size with 300 ppi and set up the type area by Photoshop (Fig. 16). This setting was employed as a basic artboard into all pages.

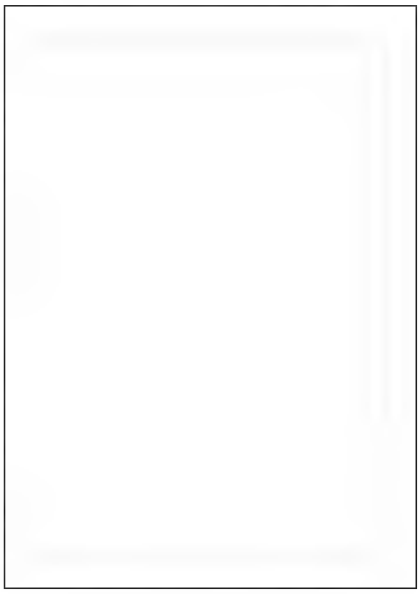


Fig. 16: Artboard setting (Xu, 2019)

o Inking

Next, I lined frames out for a single page and inked images, containing lines and shades of figures, objects and circumstances, in each frame based on roughs from the storyboard (Fig. 17). This was a key step in the entire production since it built the fundamental picture world of the graphic novel. For this reason, I deliberated every facial expression and body language for each character, the visual reasonability of surroundings and their mutual relationship.

Fig. 17: Inking images (Xu, 2019)

More importantly, by means of the semiotic framework mentioned above (Fig. 15), the images (sign vehicles) can reflect (signify) their underlying meanings (referent) through the storytelling of the graphic novel (interpretant). On the whole, there are three kinds of metaphors, inclusive of brainwashing, prison and male dominance, in this visual narrative. Several examples are shown as below (Fig. 18, 19 & 20).

In these three representations, brainwashing creates a beauty myth that causes women voluntarily to stay in their gilded marriage/family/community, in fact a prison, which is constructed and controlled by male-dominant authorities. It means, in my semiotic system, that the process of women's emancipation has to break through threefold obstacles, i.e. brainwashing, prison and male power. Undoubtedly, waking up from their brainwashed mind is the primary step that is just what Cory/Coral does in the story world.

o Colouring

Then, I coloured each panel on the basis of the inks. The use of colour was basically split up into two types: neutral colour as identities of elements

BRAINWASHING		
Signifier	**Interpreter**	**Signified**
Necklace Earring Ring		Bondage
Hair dryer		Mind control
Propagandas		Indoctrination

Fig. 18: Sense-making – brainwashing (Xu, 2019)

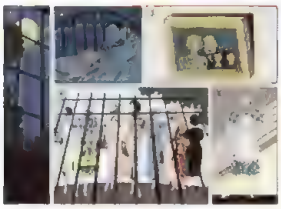
PRISON		
Signifier	**Interpreter**	**Signified**
Cage		Cell
① Window bars ② Bedhead ③ Family photo frame ④ School fence ⑤ Shadow of window blind		Fetters

Fig. 19: Sense-making – prison (Xu, 2019)

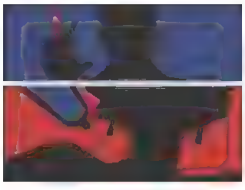
MALE DOMINANCE		
Signifier	**Interpreter**	**Signified**
Syringe		Penis
Scalpel		Male power
Logo X		Patriarchy

Fig. 20: Sense-making – male dominance (Xu, 2019)

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Fig. 21: A piece of colouring page (Xu, 2019)

without obvious tendency of emotion and emotion-making colour for constructing mood, tone or atmosphere. As demonstrated in Fig. 21, we can see the neutral colouring on Coral and Bernard from panel 1 to 5 and on the environment of the hospital in the last panel, while the use of emotion-making colour is mainly embodied in blank backgrounds, i.e. the brown, red and dark blue backgrounds in the first five panels.

Here I am about to focus more on how the emotion-making colour works in my storytelling, as colour's "function in art is directly related to our sense of participation, perception and imagination" (Pearce, 2012, p. 69). Basically, I set two key colours – blue and red – as a couple of contrast feelings on the two sides in a spectrum (Fig. 22).

Fig. 22: The emotion-making colour spectrum (Xu, 2019)

Although both of the two terminals are related to strong emotion, they have different metaphors. According to my application of Peirce's theory (Fig. 15), blue represents a sense of stability maintained by an ultraconservative power, whereas red implies an unstable and erratic feeling associated with blood, danger and tension as well as passion, excitement and courage referring to change and revolution. In this regard, Itten (1970) points out that red related to Mars is "a sign of material occupation by warriors in combat" and "the badge of revolutions" (p. 86), in contrast, "blue is always shadowy, and tends in its greatest glory to darkness" (p. 88). It is clearly shown in my graphic novel that in the main character's dream, the dramatical contrast between strong red and blue against dark black proposes an implication of the violent conflict between progressivism and conservativism, freedom and slavery, feminism and patriarchy (Fig. 23).

In addition to the dream world, the two opposite colours are also used in the reality of this story context to evoke certain strong emotions from a relatively neutral atmosphere. For example, as depicted in Fig. 21, the red palette backgrounds in the first three panels symbolise that Coral's past memories somewhat arise while she is walking into the hospital with her husband Bernard, whereas the dark blue background in panel 5 indicates that her husband representing male interests pulls her back to the reality – the patriarchal society. Similarly, in Fig. 24, the pure red

backgrounds in four panels, symbolising her nightmare, her past and the reality, signify Coral's sudden perception of something unusual. In other words, she is about to wake up from her fake beautiful life.

The strong red colour is also a distinct sign of transitions and flashbacks between Coral's dream/past and reality/present. For instance, there are three times that the protagonist suddenly

Fig. 23: Coral's nightmares (Xu, 2019)

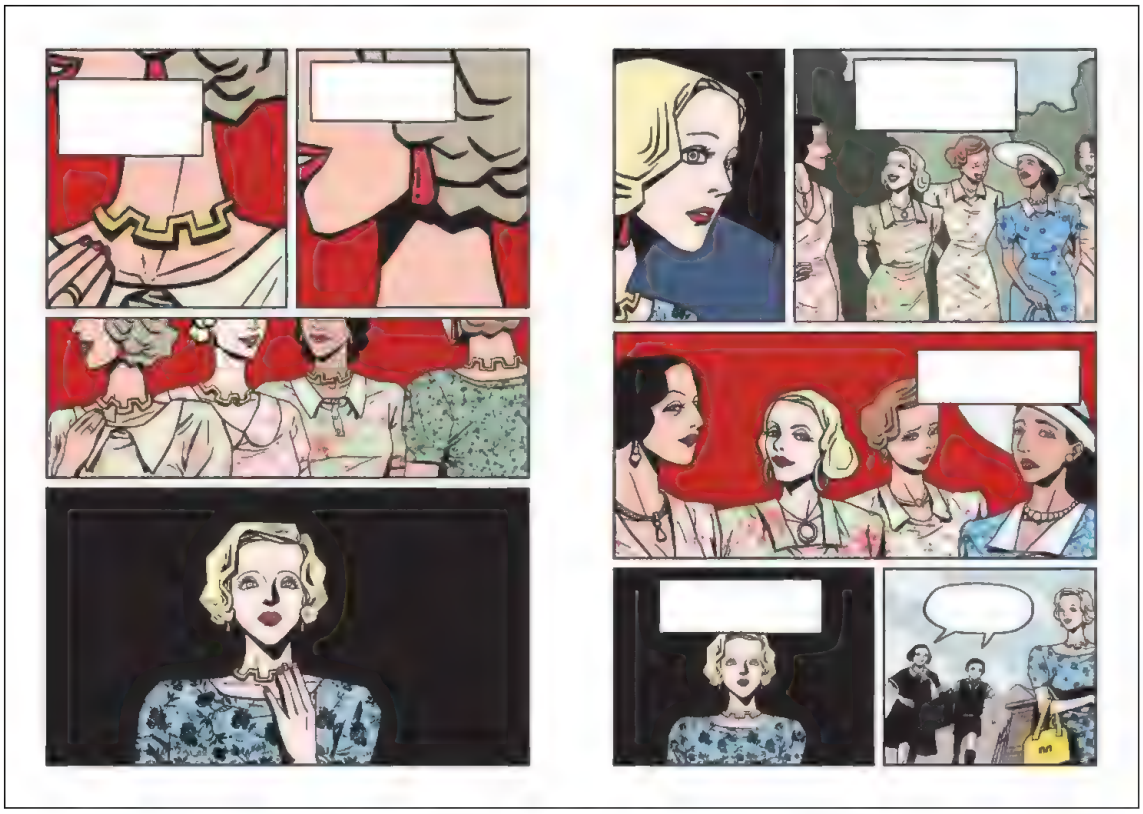

Fig. 24: Coral finding something strange (Xu, 2019)

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awakens from her nightmares, in which the red colour covering the panel of Coral's eyes plays a role of linking the dream to the reality (Fig. 25). Regarding flashbacks, Fig. 26 explains how the scenarios in Coral's nightmares are flashing back around her head when she sees the doctor in his office.

Fig. 25: The transition from dream to reality (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 26: The flashbacks of Coral's nightmares (Xu, 2019)

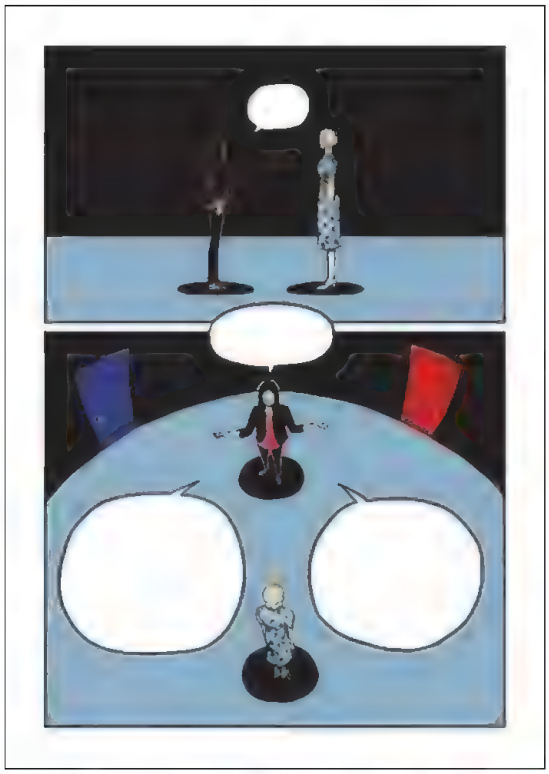

Fig. 27: The choice between the blue door and the red door (Xu, 2019)

In Coral's final dream, different from other ones, the blue and red colours on two doors against each other, respectively stand for two contrary options: the blue door, staying in the "pleasant" town but without real personality; or the red one, going back to the real world and being true colours but with unstable and even dangerous future (Fig. 27). This setting of choice between blue and red is actually a salute to the two films of *The Matrix* and *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, both of which have similar plots. While Neo in the former faces two choices between a blue pill and a red pill provided by Morpheus (Fig. 28), Walter in the latter meets two options between a blue car and a red car at an airport (Fig. 29). As a result, Neo and Walter both choose the red, which enables the former to awaken from the Matrix (dream) and enter the true world (reality) although he will have to fight for his survival and freedom with machines – the ruler, and allows the latter to start his brand new life with excitement and even danger meanwhile discarding his previous mundane and cowardly life. Likewise, after recalling her past memories, Coral decidedly chooses the red exit to confront the reality – a male dominant world, rather than sleeping in the sweet dream weaved by patriarchal power. In fact, her choice has been indicated by her eye colour conversion from blue to brown that points to red (Fig. 30).

Fig. 28: *The Matrix* (Silver & The Wachowskis, 1999)

Fig. 29: *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (Goldwyn & Stiller, 2013)

Fig. 30: The brown eyes after Coral waking up (Xu, 2019)

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Yet, Coral immediately comes across an obstacle – her husband requesting her to stay for their two children – after she awakens and regains her true consciousness of Cory. At this moment, the background colour of Coral's panel turns to brown, a vague tendency compared to the orange red on the previous page (Fig. 31). This colour transformation reveals Coral's emotional variation and some degree of hesitation in her decision, after all, she has a true relationship with her children. Nevertheless, awakened Coral is clearly aware of the most important thing to her and still remains true to herself. Consequently, the colour returns to red that indicates her explicit decision – getting rid of the chain of marriage and family and being herself (Fig. 32).

Fig. 31: The emotion-making colour's transformation [1] (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 32: The emotion-making colour's transformation [2] (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 33: The bright-dark tone shift over the story (Xu, 2019)

Apart from the blue-and-red colour strategy, I also put a bright-and-dark shift mode into the emotion-making colour system in order to present the implication of the switch between dream and reality. As shown in Fig. 33, the story timeline by and large proceeds from Coral's dark nightmares to her bright and colourful daily life, and then the tone gradually turns to dim while she is going to see the doctor, and next the world goes into grey past memories, and after Coral recoveries her consciousness the surrounding tone reveals its true colour – dark blue – a symbol of male power, and finally Coral goes out of her house, looking at the dark sky full of stars – a sign of hope and freedom. In the context of this story, the bright and colourful tone signifies an illusory reality that is actually a dream, whereas the dark and dim hue represents the truth and the approach to emancipation that seems cold and dangerous, though.

o Lettering

Finally, I added on words to panels. In regard of form, there were word balloons, word shapes and the interaction of word and picture that I work out.

I roughly sorted out of four types of text balloons, including rectangular boxes indicating narration (Fig. 34, p. 24), round balloons with a tail pointing to a character's speech or thought (Fig. 35 & 36, p. 24), rounded rectangles with a tail owning the same function as round balloons (Fig. 37 & 38, p. 24) and explosive text frames depicting loudness from characters (Fig. 39, p. 24). What is needed to be pointed out is, in this story's context, that round speech-balloons are a representation of real humans' dialogues (Fig. 35 & 36, p. 24), instead, round-corner rectangles are used to indicate speeches of those medically modified women like Coral (Fig. 37 & 38, p. 24). Accordingly, Coral's text-balloons change into round shape after she is awake (Fig. 40, p. 24).This connection exists between balloon shapes and certain groups of characters roots in the visual meanings of the two kinds of shapes: circles reflect a sense of warmth, comfort and activity whereas squares look stable, solid and conformist (Bradley, 2010).

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Fig. 34: The rectangular text box (Xu, 2019)

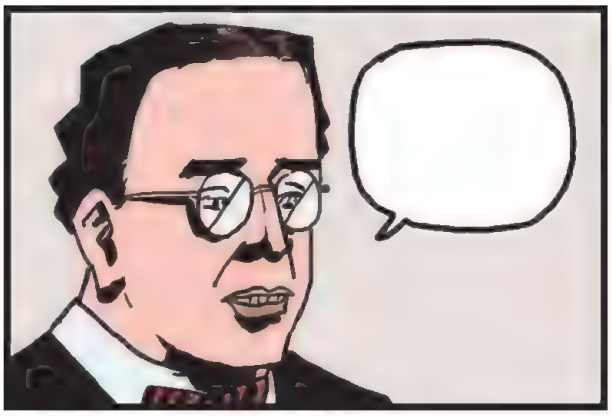

Fig. 35: The round text balloon for speech (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 36: The round text balloon for thought (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 37: The rounded-rectangular text balloon for speech (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 38: The rounded-rectangular text balloon for thought (Xu, 2019)

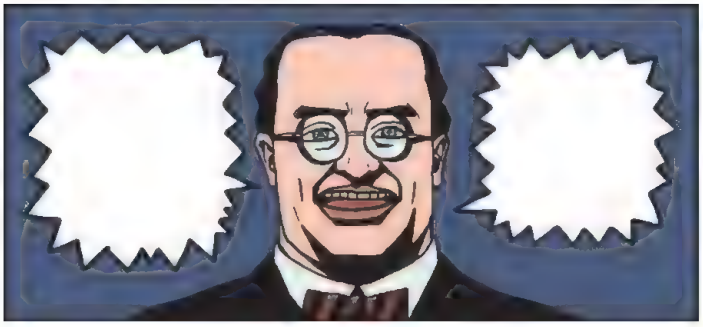

Fig. 39: The explosive text box (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 40: The round shape of awake Coral's text balloons (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 41: Narrative words (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 42: Highlighting words (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 43: Loud words (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 44: Harsh sound words (Xu, 2019)

Closely relating to word balloons, words were shaped by selecting appropriate fonts that could follow their corresponding emotions, such as normal fonts for narration (Fig. 41), bold italics for emphasis (Fig. 42), big fonts for loudness (Fig. 43) and hand-draw letterings for vocal inflection (Fig. 44).

As the combination of picture and word is a critical characteristic "that distinguishes comics from other related artforms such as illustrated books" (Wartenberg, 2012, p. 102), I applied some of seven types of text-image combinations introduced by McCloud (Fig. 45). For example, the story ends up with Coral's monologues, which refer to her shaking off her chains of marriage, in parallel with the sequential images, which

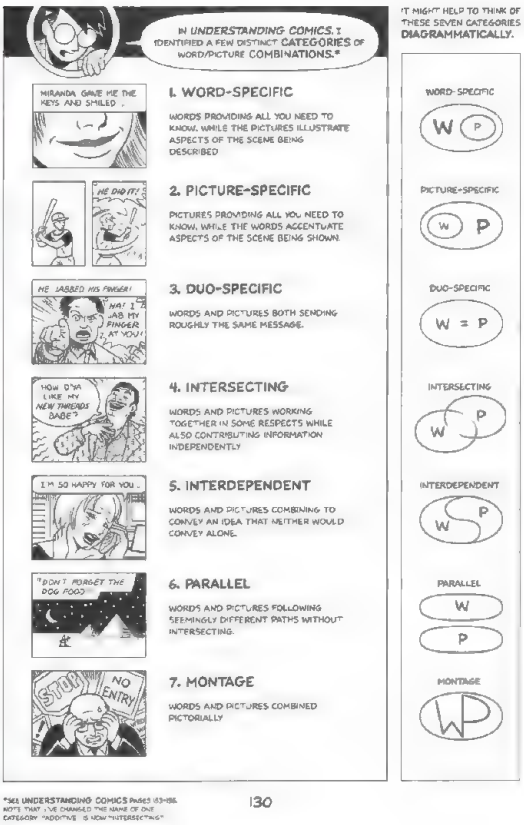
IN UNDERSTANDING COMICS, I IDENTIFIED A FEW DISTINCT CATEGORIES OF WORD/PICTURE COMBINATIONS.*
IT MIGHT HELP TO THINK OF THESE SEVEN CATEGORIES DIAGRAMMATICALLY.
1. WORD-SPECIFIC
WORDS PROVIDING ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW. WHILE THE PICTURES ILLUSTRATE ASPECTS OF THE SCENE BEING DESCRIBED
2. PICTURE-SPECIFIC
PICTURES PROVIDING ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW. WHILE THE WORDS ACCENTUATE ASPECTS OF THE SCENE BEING SHOWN.
3. DUO-SPECIFIC
WORDS AND PICTURES BOTH SENDING ROUGHLY THE SAME MESSAGE.
4. INTERSECTING
WORDS AND PICTURES WORKING TOGETHER IN SOME RESPECTS WHILE ALSO CONTRIBUTING INFORMATION INDEPENDENTLY
5. INTERDEPENDENT
WORDS AND PICTURES COMBINING TO CONVEY AN IDEA THAT NEITHER WOULD CONVEY ALONE.
6. PARALLEL
WORDS AND PICTURES FOLLOWING SEEMINGLY DIFFERENT PATHS WITHOUT INTERSECTING.
7. MONTAGE
WORDS AND PICTURES COMBINED PICTORIALLY
WORD-SPECIFIC
PICTURE-SPECIFIC
DUO-SPECIFIC
INTERSECTING
INTERDEPENDENT
PARALLEL
MONTAGE
130

Fig. 45: Seven categories of word/picture combinations (McCloud, 2006)

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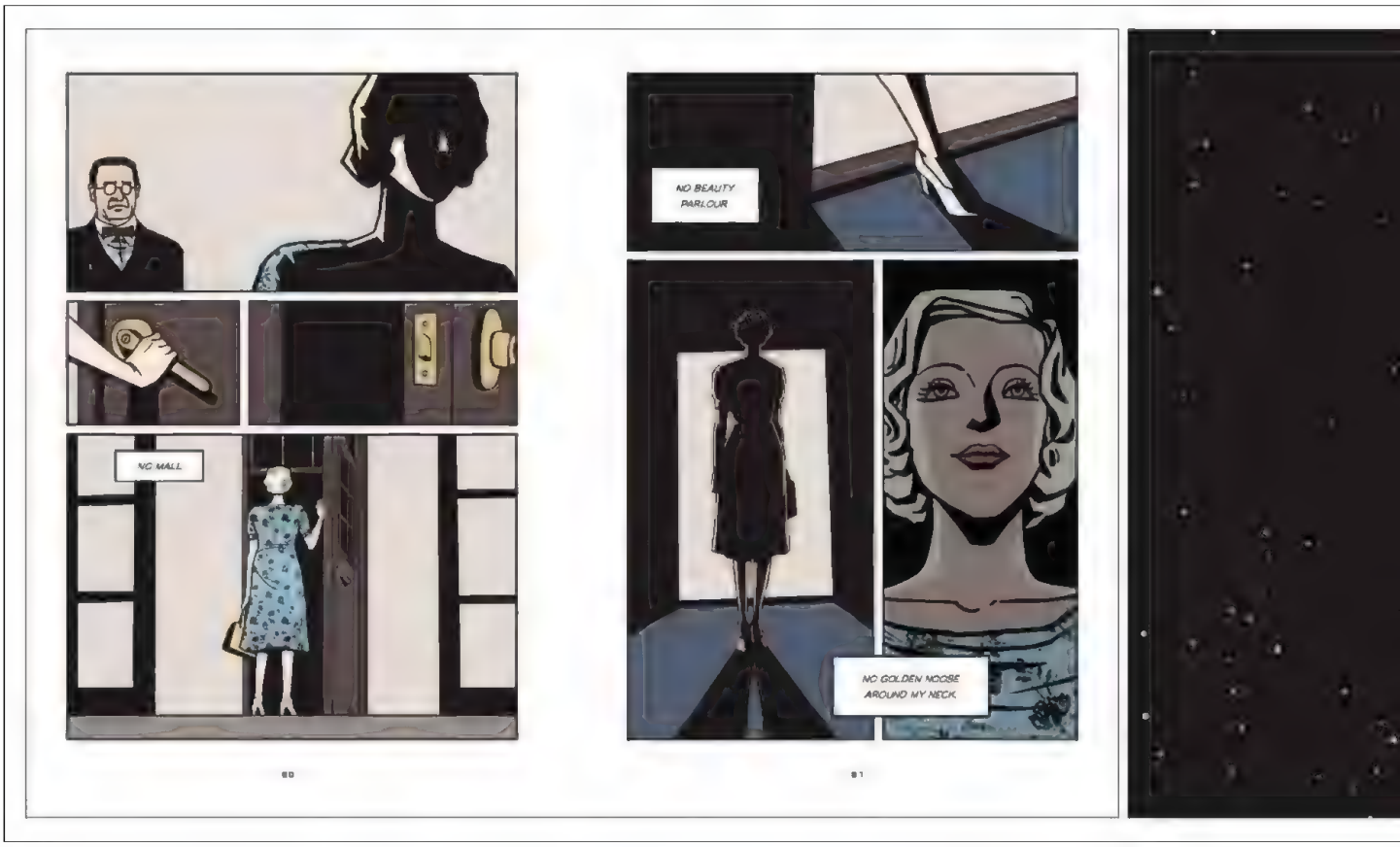
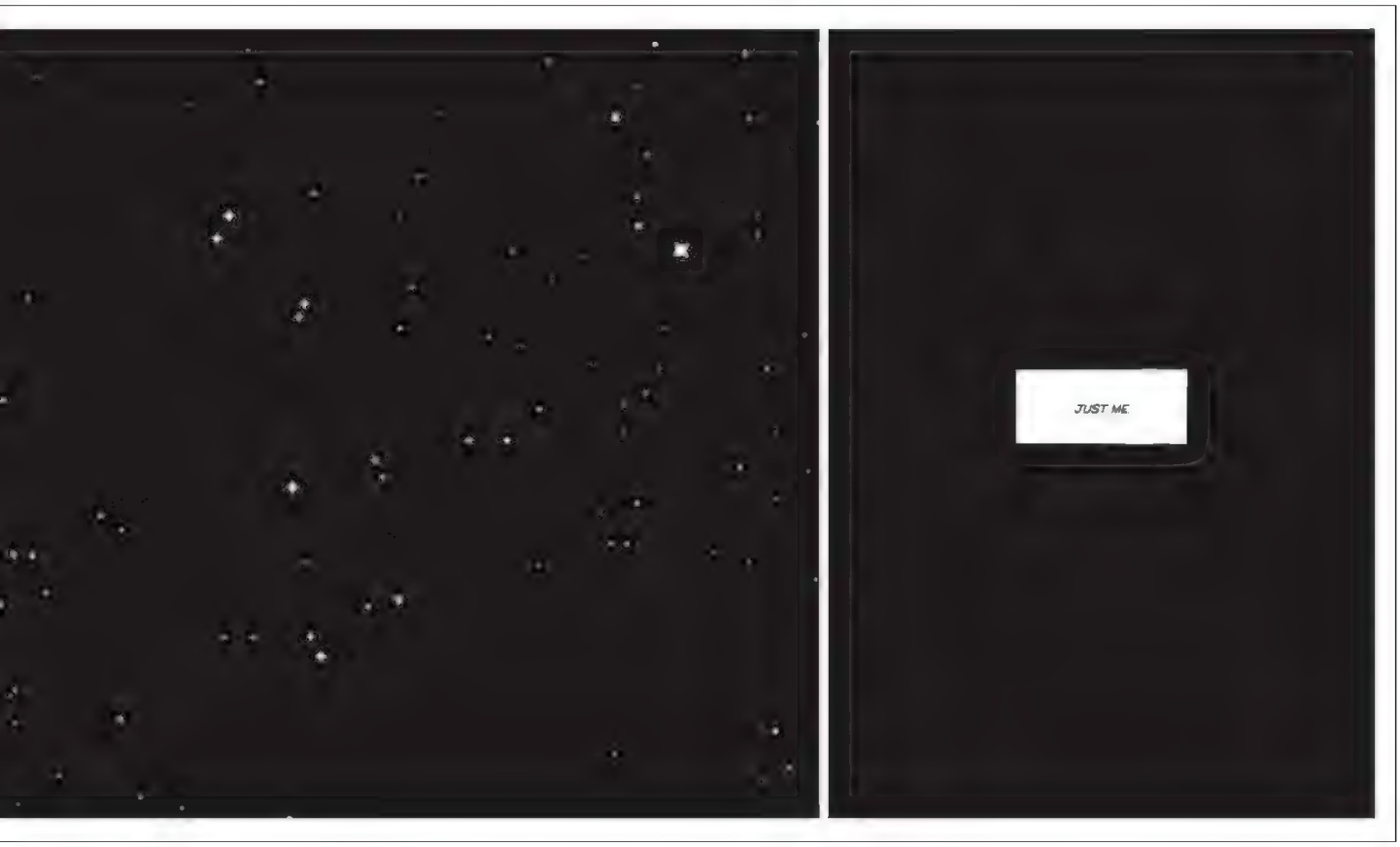


Fig. 46: Coral's monologue at the end (Xu, 2019)

describe her walking out of the house (Fig. 46). This means can not only "save room and create a dense, layered texture" (McCloud, 2006, p. 138), but also bring out the theme of this story – waking up from marriage.

In respect of content, I repeatedly scrutinised every word from every single character so that a voice could match its opposite role. For example, I made Coral have a speech as shown in Fig. 47 like "but I can't get back into the Coral mould" (Xu, 2019, p. 79), a salute to "I can't go back to Jell-O molds" (Sherman-Palladino, 2018), said by Midge (the main character of the TV series *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*) who was going to pursue her true colours (Fig. 48). This is a clear signal that Cory is awake from Coral – the brainwashing woman made by male power.

Fig. 47: Coral's words in terms of her decision (Xu, 2019)



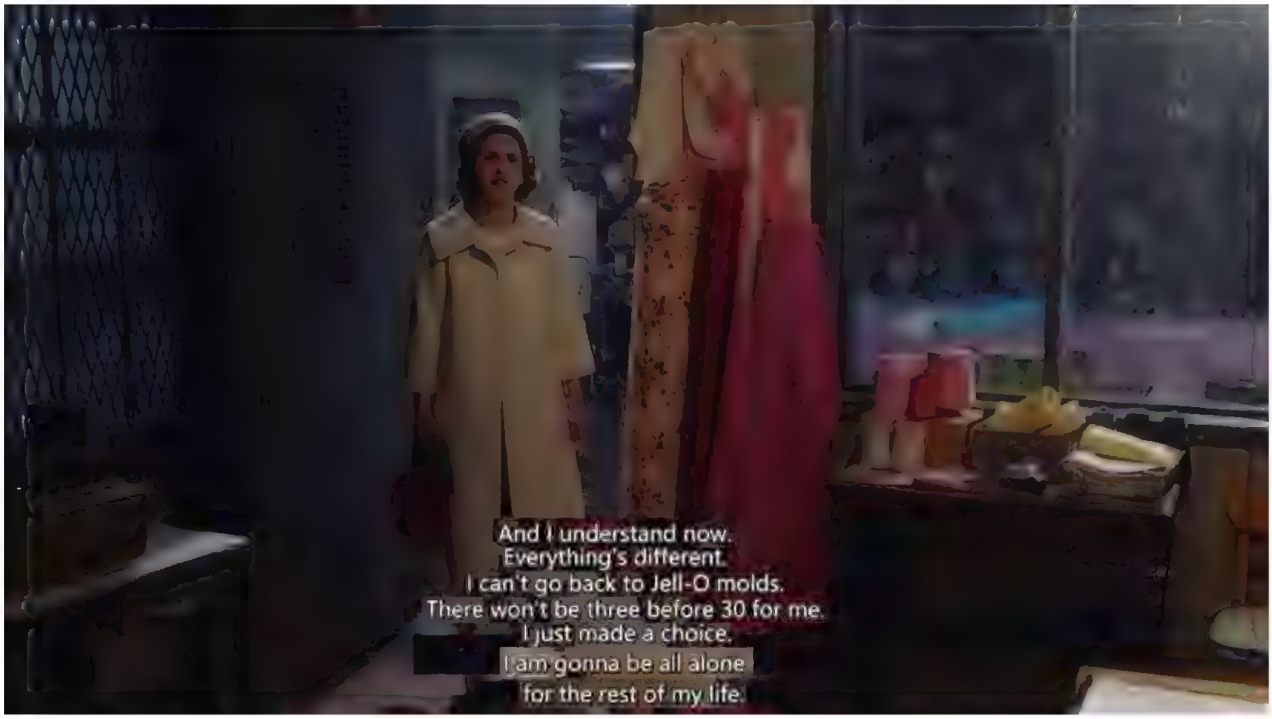

And I understand now.
Everything's different.
I can't go back to Jell-O molds.
There won't be three before 30 for me.
I just made a choice.
I am gonna be all alone
for the rest of my life.

Fig. 48: Miriam's lines at the end of final episode in *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* season 2 (Sherman-Palladino, 2018)

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- **Book design**

At the same time of making artwork above, I commenced the design for the final physical book. Firstly, I selected a size of 160×231mm for this book from a group of options (Fig. 49).

Fig. 49: The choice of book sizes (Xu, 2019)

Then, I developed the cover (Fig. 50) from a few rough designs based on the concept in relation to chains, shackles or cages (Fig. 51). As Fig. 49 clearly shows, the front cover is comprised of four black bars of a cage, behind which is a dark red shape outlining the main character's portrait against a blood red background. Also, the book title "25" is shaped as a component of the cage bars, so the front cover reflects an appropriate combination of image and text. In the vein of the front cover, the back cover demonstrates a simple layout: a logo of 25 along with a relevant website link in the centre of the space, as well as the spine straightforwardly shows the names of the book and the author. The colour use also followed the tone of Coral's nightmare. Overall, this cover design is supposed to concisely signify an oppressing sensation that can hook readers.

Fig. 50: The cover design (Xu, 2019)

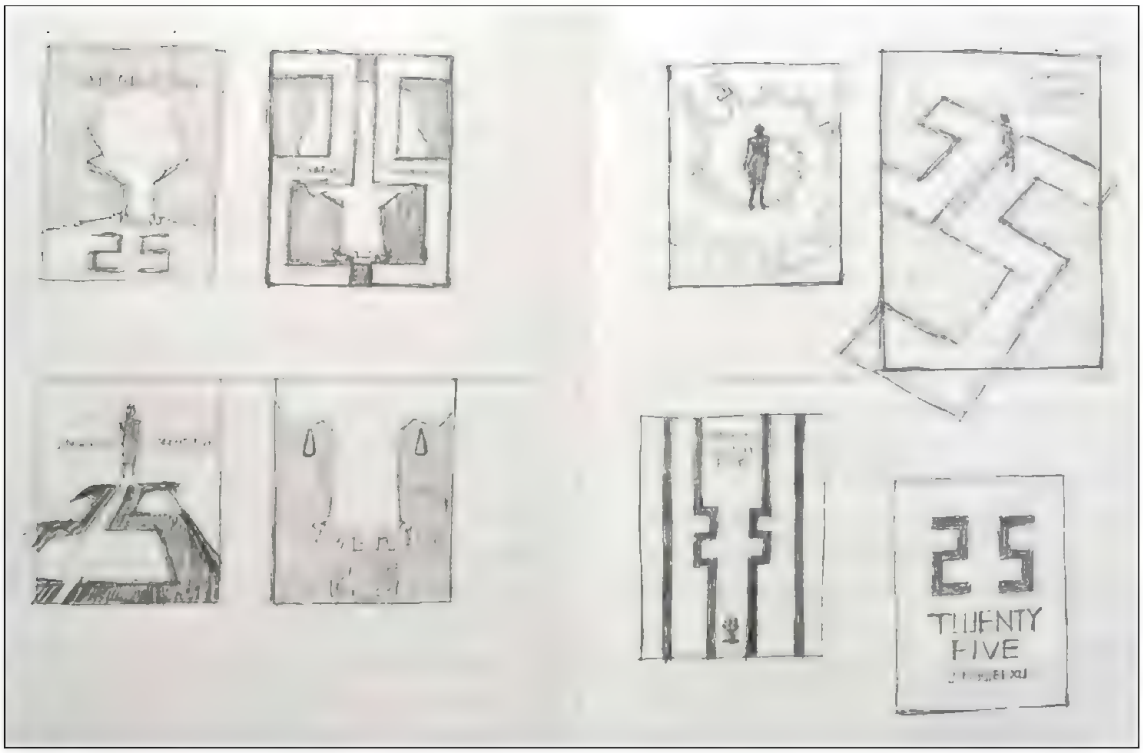

Fig. 51: The cover design roughs (Xu, 2019)

As to the page layout, it had been operated since the finished art started. After all, for graphic novels or comics, making finished art has to proceed with its layout design simultaneously. Only several points were new considerations, like page numbers, title page, credit page, preface page, chapter page and acknowledgement page.

Eventually, the physical books including hardcovers and paperbacks as a result were printed out based on above course of tense and complex performance (Fig. 52).

Fig. 52: The physical outcomes (Xu, 2019)

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Opening Title

The opening title was supposed as a hook of the graphic novel, thus all work on it was for this aim.

Firstly, the video's duration was limited in around one minute so that it could meet the demand of digital-age audiences who are used to seeing fast pace. Then, the tone of this hook was set as a horror-like feeling, which gave rise to the moments in Coral's nightmare in the graphic novel. Following this tone, I got the direction to select the background music – a horror genre original music named *Consecrated Ground* [2] for free use, and then I edited by Audition and applied it to the title design. According to the preparation above, I wrote the script (Fig. 53), drew the storyboard (Fig. 54) and created a rough video

Twenty-five
(Trailer)

Written by

JINGWEI XU
1502041
ICIB8007 Creative Practice Project
PGD in Creative Practice
1 Feb, 2019

Music starts

0:00-0:22
DONSON PRESENTS
Falling number images of 2 and 5 one after another, along with several Coral's facial close-ups, Coral is standing in the darkness where 2s and 5s combine into numerous "25"s. The close-up of 25.

0:23-0:31
Suddenly these 25s transform to a long chain, flying past Coral towards sky
Supervised by William Bardebes

0:32-0:38
Then, a cage swings and falls down along the chain.
Music by Alexander Nakarada

0:39-0:55
Written by Jingwei Xu
A girl (Cory) is in the cage, waving to Coral. Coral is trying to approach Cory, stretching her arm towards Cory. (Using a couple of positive and negative shots properly.)

Music ends

0:55-1:00
After a sharp light, the girl in the cage becomes Coral with a shocking face (Facial close-up to full shot).
Directed by Jingwei Xu

1:00-1:10
The full shot becomes a static page of an open book. Then the book closes, showing its cover.

1:10-1:15
Titles appear aside by the book's cover:
A Graphic Novel by Jingwei Xu
To find out more on www.25.weebly.com

Fig. 53: The script of the opening title (Xu, 2019)

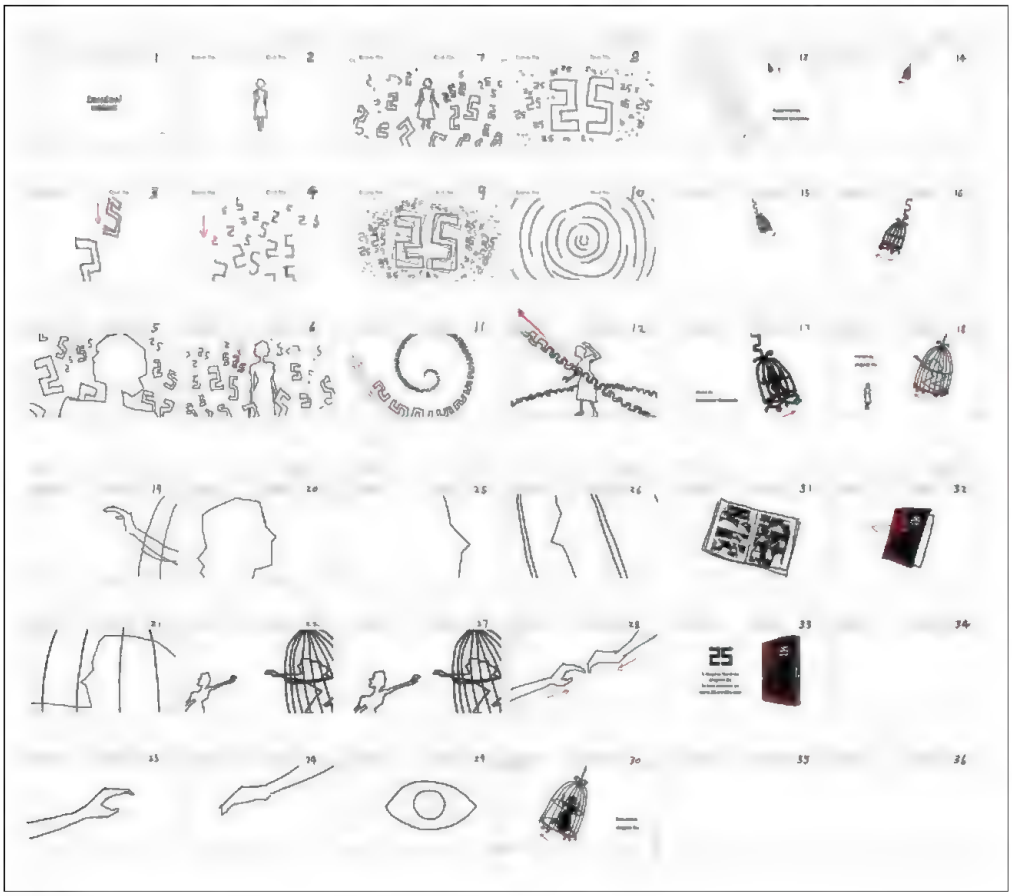

Fig. 54: The storyboard of the opening title (Xu, 2019)

[2] Written by Alexander Nakarada and retrieved from https://freepd.com.

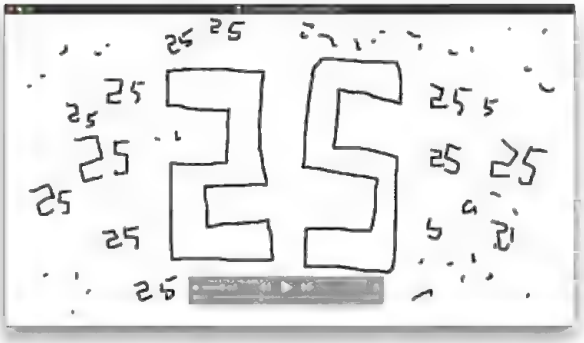

Fig. 55: The rough video of the opening title (Xu, 2019)

composed of the images of the storyboard and the music (Fig. 55).

Next, the formal composition was commenced and completed on the basis of the rough video (Fig. 56). This was an iterative process, from shape creation and shot connection to camera movement and character action. The genre was affected by the main title of *Feud: Bette and Joan* (Fig. 57) and Saul Bass's design work (Fig. 58). It is noticeable that my opening title is made for a physical book other than a movie or a TV show. Thus, this title design is supposed to be a trailer for advertising the graphic novel, although it is also an opening sequence of this book. That is why this video ends up with a rotating book plus relevant information after the shot transfers from the animated world to the book pages (Fig. 56).

Fig. 56: The final opening title (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 57: The opening title of *Feud: Bette and Joan* (Prologue, 2017)

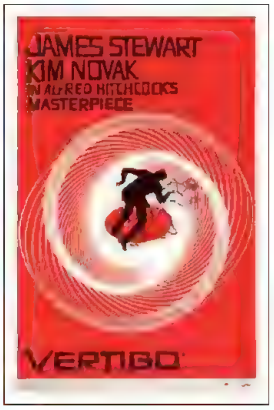

Fig. 58: The film poster of *Vertigo* (Bass, 1958)

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Visual Communication

If the main title can be considered as a promotional means for the graphic novel, then the visual communication is more likely to be a hook or a series of advertisements for the entire artwork – the combination of a graphic novel and an opening video.

Fig. 59: The static logo (Xu, 2019)

This work emphasised on branding the project. For this, I distilled the artwork's logo including static pattern (Fig. 59) and kinematic version (Fig. 60) from the title typeface on the book cover (Fig. 50, p. 28), due to its underlying meaning pointing to the central information in the story that "every woman turned 18 must get married before 25 years old" (Xu, 2019, p. 52).

Fig. 60: The keyframes of the animated logo (Xu, 2019)

Depending on the logo, a package of visual communication designs came out, such as posters (Fig. 61, 62 & 63), 3D book display effects (Fig. 64) and relevant products like stickers (Fig. 65), calendars (Fig. 66) and invitation (Fig. 67). I also designed the moving pictures for some of them, such as a three-dimensional rotating book (Fig. 68), an animated poster and a motion invitation card, to adapt to the characters of digital media.

Fig. 61: The major poster (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 62: The secondary poster (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 63: The poster in light box [rendering] (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 65: The stickers (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 64: The book demonstration [rendering] (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 66: The calendars (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 67: The invitation of the project exhibition (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 68: The keyframes of the animated book display (Xu, 2019)

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All of these advertising works were finally composed and presented in the form of two art shows, which were divided into online and offline modes. While the former is a website[3] demonstrating the whole project associated with the introduction, the opening video, the book linked to an online book display platform and relevant advertising designs (Fig. 69 & 70), the latter was an exhibition involved in a local independent arts festival to show all physical work plus the video hook (Fig. 71). To some extent, the two sorts of shows have contributed to communicating my project.

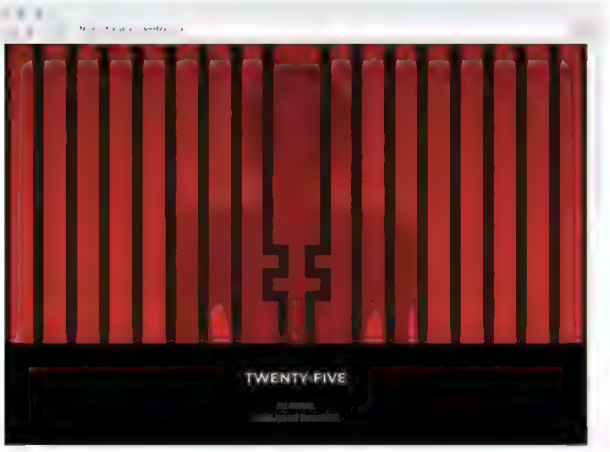

Fig. 69: The online show (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 70: The webpage capture of the online show (Xu, 2019)

Fig. 71: The offline show (Xu, 2019)

[3] Based on Weebly that provides various templates to customise my showcase.

The Knowledge

As illuminated above, the practical journey in my entire research looked at how to compose a narrative artwork – a graphic novel attaching a main title – by which telling a story and implying my understanding of feminism. During this iteratively creative process, I, in the centre of this practitioner-led research, have developed my personal knowledge with threefold meanings respectively from the perspectives of Form, Storytelling and Ideas.

Combinatory Form

The combination of a graphic novel and a title sequence can enhance the communication power of a graphic novel. It is true that a short video can easily spread via the Internet in the digital age. Consequently, a graphic novel book can take full advantage of the Internet – the most important medium nowadays – by attaching a trailer to be easy of access.

More importantly, rather than a commercial advertisement or a marketing strategy in a general sense, the opening title is an indispensable component integrated into the graphic novel both in content and in visual style. It means that this union can expand the artistic boundaries of comics and their concept in a certain degree. In the future, it might be a norm that audiences tend to see a graphic novel's title sequence before reading the book along with the development of this combinatory practice. If so, not only graphic novels and comic books but also traditional publications might meet their renaissance.

Symbolic Storytelling

This upgraded graphic novel is still in use in telling a story. I have technically employed the laws of making comics into my practice and it worked well, however, what has tremendously contributed to my knowledge development is the application of Peircean semiotics. On account of this, I have generated a concept called Symbolic Storytelling, which is an interpreting system allowing elements (e.g. images, colours, dialogues) in graphic novels to symbolise referents (Fig. 72). In other words, an element has no connection with an object until a storyteller interprets it, or just as Chandler (2001) notes that "the meaning of a sign is not contained within it, but arises in its interpretation" (Chandler, 2001, p. 35). While this finding, from my perspective, can boost the philosophical value of graphic novels, it can also contribute to creators' ideas reflection.

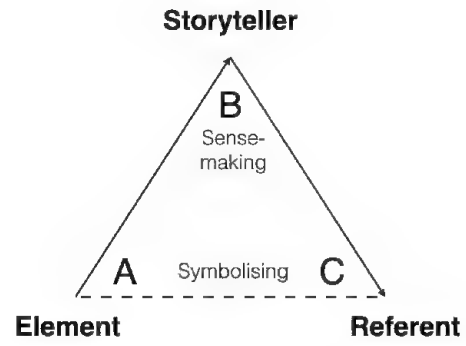

Fig. 72: The symbolic storytelling system (Xu, 2019)

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Reflective Ideas

Through storytelling in a symbolic system, my ideas/claims have been unfolded as three points of my interpretation of female emancipation:

- Women cannot genuinely obtain their freedom unless they actively get rid of the moral hijack of marriage, family and kinship, etc;
- Women do not have to be well-behaved to cater for male supremacy;
- Men are not likely to unselfishly help women or support feminism.

First of all, morality has historically and strongly been embedded in marriage, family and the relationship between family members. In this situation, a woman is hardly accepted into the society unless she becomes a wife and a mother (de Beauvoir, 1949/2010). In other words, the labels of "wife" and "mother" are the moral criteria for women. Therefore, a woman is immoral if she does not become a wife and a mother or she gives up the two roles. She is not allowed to be herself – the One, but the Other (de Beauvoir, 1949/2010). Under the control of this rule, it is extremely hard for women to move towards their emancipation, even though some of them have been aware of the importance of female independence. As far as I am concerned, women's success in freedom must undergo the torture of ripping off their wife-and-mother role labelled by patriarchy. That is why Coral/Cory in my graphic novel finally decides to leave her marriage and children and primarily concern for herself – not a wife and a mother any more but "JUST ME" (Xu, 2019, p. 84). Of course, this is a fictional character, but still, she as a sign can represent women who are stuck in their marriage, family and kinship in real life.

Secondly, following the vein of the last paragraph related to the moral standard for women, it can be deduced that a woman who is not a wife or a mother is more likely to be seen as a misbehaved woman, let alone a woman like Coral/Cory who actively gives up her motherhood. This is the very issue for women seeking emancipation to be concerned about, and this is also a key problem that a gender-equality society must address. The first step of action seems that a so-called disobedient woman should not be judged from the social perspective. Meanwhile, from a personal angle, a woman does not have to make herself well-behaved and does not need to live in the shadow of stigma because of her disobedience.

In addition, people are increasingly realising the significance of men's help and support for women's awakening, however, men as representative of male power automatically stand up for their own interests. In the context of the graphic novel, the society is under the rule of an extremely conservative power, which is a guardian of patriarchy and treats women as objects. In such a situation, men as a beneficial owner have no reason to question the patriarchal culture. On the contrary, they wish that the situation that women are inferior to men would be perpetuated (de Beauvoir, 1949/2010). Even though a man, like Bernard in my fictional story, objectively enables his wife to wake up, his initial intent is keeping his wife's memories about him and their children, not subjectively supporting feminism. It is true that his action helps Coral

recover her previous consciousness, however, he is absolutely not aware of feminism or his wife's subjective will, as de Beauvoir (1949/2010) notes that "the man most sympathetic to women never knows her concrete situation fully" (p. 35). What he does is just for himself without any relation to unselfish help. Just imagine, would Bernard still help Coral wake up if he did not care about her losing memories with him and children or if she was still be Coral – a docile wife – not becoming Cory? The answer is no. That is to say, Bernard's help would never occur if Coral never tried to wake up. In a larger context, men would not be involved in supporting feminism, if feminist movements never happened. Therefore, women need to keep a cool head and realise that female equal rights always rely on their own active struggles rather than the assistance of men who inevitably protect their own power and are unaware of, and unwilling to unselfishly help women.

All of these ideas above echo my claim generated in my previous research that women who struggle for their own rights must take the most effective step to wake up from their marriage, which is an ideal form to oppress females and reinforce male dominance.

Conclusion

As has been shown, this research has carried out a graphic novel practice, in which my claim is embedded that it is significant for women to wake up from their marriage/family/kinship that can be a form of oppression from patriarchy and to realise that they have the right to firstly consider their own interests when they come into conflict with their marriage or family. Of course, it has not been possible to precisely communicate my thoughts of feminism to the audience owing to the implicit nature of artwork, and also there are limitations in terms of my learning about feminism and visual narratives from this research. What is clear, however, is that I have developed my knowledge, involving the value of the artform mixing a graphic novel and a main title together, the role of symbolism and semiotics in narratives and my understanding of female awakening. According to these findings and previous stage research, a solution framework for my whole research can be visually summarised as a reflective triangle model (Fig. 73).

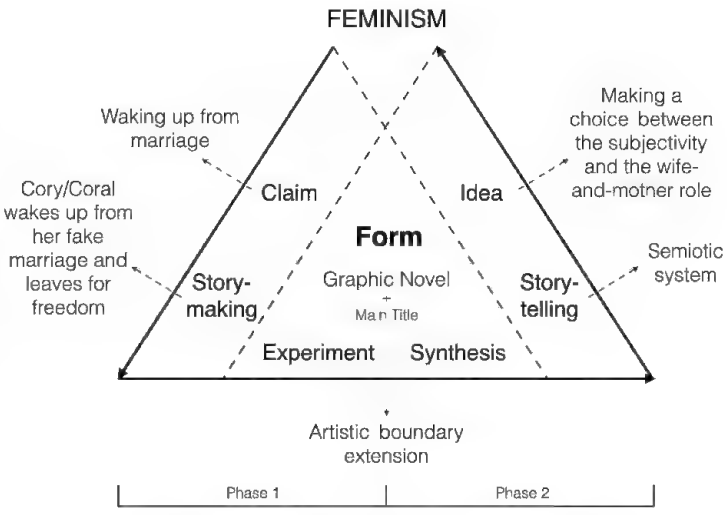

Fig. 73: The solution triangle for the entire research (Xu, 2019)

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It is clearly shown in Fig. 73 that my research journey started from looking into the topic of feminism, which developed my main claim, then I constructed a specific story along with a series of visual experiments in line with my claim, next I conducted and completed the combinatory art form, narrating the story in a symbolic way, and finally through the storytelling my interpretation of women's emancipation was reflected and it responded to the topic of feminism where I launched my research. Potentially, this model can be an inspiring approach to further practice-led research on similar realm.

Lastly, as the graphic novel at present just unfolds a starting point, like an introduction to an entire unknown universe, it would be worthwhile to gradually develop the story world further in the future. For instance, the story can continue to explore how Coral is going to survive in the extreme male-dominant society. Or it can tell the same story from another character's view, such as Bernard, Dr Bridges or Coral's mother. Then, one volume after another, linking to each other, a Twenty-five Universe can emerge ahead of readers.

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To see the graphic novel project, visit
25yearsold.weebly.com
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Bridging the Divide through Graphic Novels: Teaching non-Jews' Holocaust Narratives to Jewish Students

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Bridging the Divide through Graphic Novels: Teaching non-Jews' Holocaust Narratives to Jewish Students

In the following paper I argue that the inclusion of Rutu Modan's graphic novel *The Property* and Nora Krug's graphic novel *Belonging* into Holocaust classes in Jewish schools can introduce Jewish students examples of non-Jews relating to the Holocaust in ways that move beyond familiar tropes of either denial or pity and through this, powerfully affect the way they think about the Holocaust. Modan and Krug show how the Holocaust continues to reverberate today and impacts non-Jews, even if it was not their personal tragedy. The significance of including this type of education in Jewish day schools emerges as a result of a confluence of factors that are relevant to contemporary Jewish students. The rise in global anti-Semitism, the inclusion of the Holocaust as part of almost all Jewish day school curricula, and an emphasis within that curricula on teaching about righteous non-Jews who saved Jews' lives, necessitates introducing contemporary Jewish students to examples of non-Jews who think deeply, passionately, and concernedly about the legacy of the Holocaust. Including modern examples of non-Jews like those in Krug's and Modan's works can help to combat the natural tendency of Jewish students to become insular and instead lead to a more thoughtful and nuanced dialogue about the ways that non-Jews should engage with Holocaust commemoration. The two graphic novels provide a new way of thinking about how Holocaust education can be meaningful to Jewish students by showing non-Jews who actively work towards making meaning of the past and who work alongside Jews to craft a new and shared – yet different - narrative about the past, while hopefully forging a path together for a different future.

Over the past decade, Jewish students do not need to look far in order to see that anti-Semitism remains a pernicious and pervasive presence in Western society. In 2019, Tel Aviv University published a study that showed a 13% increase in global anti-Semitic incidents from the previous year (cited in 'Anti-Semitic attacks' 2019). More alarming than the increase, however, was the report's conclusion that 'anti-Semitism is no longer an issue confined to the activity of the far left, far right and radical Islamists triangle – it has mainstreamed and became an integral part of life' (cited in 'Anti-Semitic attacks' 2019). Recent anti-Semitic incidents have included synagogue shootings in the United States, attacks on Jews in the streets of Germany ('German Jews warned' 2019b), and graffiti being spray-painted on tombstones in France (Cossé 2019). The escalation of anti-Semitism in Germany led Felix Klein, the German government's anti-Semitism commissioner, to caution Jews against wearing kippot - ritual head coverings – in recognition that some neighbourhoods and cities were not safe spaces where Jews can show their religion (cited in Walker 2019).

The rise in anti-Semitic incidents is directly correlated to recent findings about European Jews who report feeling at greater risk of endangerment than in preceding years. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2018) reported that 90% of its Jewish respondents believed that anti-Semitism is worsening in their country with 30% saying that they had personally experienced anti-Semitism, and that they had voluntarily chosen to not attend Jewish events out of fear for their safety. Perhaps most alarming is that almost 80% admitted that they would not report minor anti-Semitic incidents to the police because they did not think that it would make a difference to do so.

Alongside the increase in anti-Semitic incidents is the rise of nationalist parties in Europe who have made it a matter of policy to reframe the ways that the Holocaust is addressed in society. Two notable examples are Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party whose co-leader Alexander Gauland (cited in Laub 2018) described the Holocaust as 'small bird poop in over 1000 years of successful German history' and Poland's Law and Justice (PiS) party which enacted legislation that prohibits ascribing blame to Poland for what befell its Jews during the Holocaust, despite evidence of incidents where Poles did play an active role in massacring Jews.

How Jewish educators teach students about historical and contemporary anti-Semitism can play a significant role in determining how their students come to relate to and understand the shifting attitudes towards their own community. Additionally, by providing students with a way of contextualizing current anti-Semitic incidents in light of historical ones like the Holocaust, and by considering the ways that non-Jews have behaved, curriculum and teachers can play a formative role in shaping how Jewish students understand and relate to the world.

Despite the over 70 years that have passed since the Holocaust, there is minimal research about what Holocaust education looks like or its efficacy in any school system, let alone in Jewish schools. E. Doyle Stevick and Zehavit Gross (2015: 3) wrote that teaching about the Holocaust 'can contribute to making a better world, to protecting human rights and strengthening democracy, and even to preventing genocide' yet they recognize that this position is predicated almost entirely on anecdotal evidence. Jeffrey Alan Ellison (2017: 4) has noted that the few studies that have been completed focus on 'what should be' and not 'what is'. In order to determine how the Holocaust is being taught, Ellison studied over 30 American Jewish schools. He determined that that the primary topics that students learn revolve around events from the Nazi era in Europe, and that the overwhelming focus of study was on the Jewish experience. The notable topic that did not focus on Jews was about non-Jews who risked their own lives to save Jews; this topic was included in that over 82% of schools' Holocaust curriculum.

Beyond considering *what* is taught, Ellison also explored *why* the Holocaust was taught. Schools reported wanting to teach the Holocaust so that students are better educated about the past and so that students can become advocates against other genocides. The most important rationale, however, was the relationship between the Holocaust and strengthening a student's Jewish identity. The Holocaust was also used as a way to teach students about past anti-Semitism and also as a bridge for understanding the anti-Semitism that is happening in the world around them and the growing concern of Holocaust denial in a world where fewer survivors are counted among the living from previous decades.

As part of Ellison's research, he also found a clear demarcation between how Jewish schools approach teaching the Holocaust and how non-Jewish schools teach the Holocaust. He (2017: 12) discovered that while Jewish schools emphasized the Holocaust as a unique experience in Jewish history, non-Jewish schools focused on 'teaching about the dangers of prejudice and stereotypes and respect for human rights'. Ellison's observations about contrasting models of Holocaust education as part of universalistic or particularistic pedagogy echo the wider philosophical conversations about teaching the Holocaust. In a review of Israeli publications about how to teach the Holocaust, Gross (2010: 107) noted that there are proponents

for teaching the Holocaust as a universal topic about human rights framed through the lens of Jewish genocide (Auron 2003, and Naveh, Vered, and Shachar 2009). There are also proponents who insist that by universalizing the Holocaust in this way the Holocaust will no longer be recognized as a uniquely Jewish experience (Schatzker 1992)). Lastly, there are proponents (Ofer 2004 and Schweber 2003) who call for a synthesis between the two in which 'the Holocaust can be understood only if the Jewish and the universal context complement each other'. The bridging of these different outlooks is the foundation of the type of education that I believe can help Jewish students better understand how to navigate the complex ways that anti-Semitism is being manifested today and the ways that non-Jews can relate to the Holocaust and the Jewish community.

Beyond the pedagogical challenges of successful Holocaust education, Claire Gorrara (2019: 111) has identified a further practical challenge in developing Holocaust curriculum. With the passing of each Holocaust survivor and the farther chronologically we are removed from the Nazi era, 'the Holocaust will move from the realm of communicative memory, remembered with the lifetime of a generation, to that of cultural memory, where past is available to us only via material objects, visual and written narratives and historical sites of memory'. Gorrara suggests that graphic novels can play an important role in effectively facilitating the inevitable transition from communicative to cultural memory, and for ensuring that the Holocaust is not relegated to a footnote of history by students in classrooms.

The potential significance of graphic novels in history education has been written about by many. J. Spencer Clark has suggested that the narrative emphasis and the ways that both dialogue and nonverbal communication are employed makes history personal in a way that requires students to think about historical agency. It leads readers 'to understand historical events as the result of much more than the historical actors' choices' (Clark 2014: 503) by recognizing the significance that context and history can play in shaping choices. Many graphic novels, including both *Belonging* and *The Property*, involve chronological leaps in which past and present are blurred together which show how the past remains active in the present. These linear and nonlinear readings 'hold great potential as a useful pedagogical resource to explore ways in which the past is with us, but at the same time, remains beyond our reach' (Cromer and Clark 2007: 585). Furthermore, the juxtaposition of word and image directly address the multisensory and multimodal ways that students learn today. This type of text is reflective of the textbooks that many schools employ today. Historical graphic novels 'embed images within that primary flow' (Boerman-Cornell 2015: 210) and can help to ensure that the reader gains a more complete understanding of the material.

Many scholars have argued that graphic novels are an important medium for relaying the experiences of Holocaust survivors and for being able to convey the magnitude of the event. Gorrara (2019: 112) writes: 'the comic books has long been considered a medium able to disrupt conventional ways of seeing war'. Hillary Chute (2016: 31) notes how graphic novels about war communicate 'an ethics of looking and reading that is intent on defamiliarizing standard or received images of history while yet aiming to communicate' about those events. One of the most important technical traits that facilitate these powerful imaginings is the juxtaposition of images and words since they allow for the visualization of trauma alongside the dialogue and the verbal descriptors. The use of images serve as a powerful visual anchor and a testament to the

authenticity of the experience and the ways that the traumas of the Holocaust reverberate in the present. As well, unlike a film which dictates the pace for the viewer, graphic novels allow for the reader to dictate the pace of consumption as they navigate the page, filling in the gutters and blank spaces with their own imaginative interpretations of the story they are reading.

Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is often the starting point for any conversation about Holocaust graphic novels. Its place firmly solidified in the cannon, Spiegelman's work is included in many college and university literature, history, visual arts, and humanities courses. The publication of *Maus* ushered in a wave of Holocaust-focused graphic novels, including the two that are addressed in this paper. It is not the intention of this paper to encourage educators to replace *Maus* or to question its significance in Holocaust literature. Through narrating his father's story, Spiegelman raises important questions about how the legacy of the Holocaust is preserved for future generations and the roles that second and third generation descendants can play in serving as posthumous witnesses. In the following paper I focus exclusively on the unique features of Modan's and Krug's texts, specifically with regards to the non-Jewish components; this emphasis does not discount an important recognition that educators can certainly pair *Maus* with both *The Property* and *Belonging* as all three texts grapple with similar important questions about witnessing and reckoning with the past.

Published in 2013, Modan's *The Property* is a fictional story that follows Regina, a Holocaust survivor from Poland who is openly hostile to Poles, and her granddaughter Mica, as they travel from Israel to Poland to retake possession of an apartment that Regina's family owned before the war. Upon arrival in Poland, Regina learns that Roman, her former non-Jewish boyfriend, and the father of her recently deceased son, is living in her family's former home. Regina is initially angry with Roman and accuses him of stealing her family's property. It eventually emerges that Regina's parents forced Roman to stay away from Regina because he was not Jewish in exchange for the deed to the property. Additionally, Regina reveals to Roman that the son he never knew has died. Reminiscing over their shared tragedy of not being able to raise their son together, Regina promises to not attempt to take back the property that he had been guarding for almost seventy years.

Concurrent with Regina's narrative is one about Mica's budding romance with Tomasz, a non-Jew who leads tours throughout the Warsaw Ghetto for visiting groups. Mica actively rejects the notions of perpetual victimhood of the Jewish people and wants to be seen as a strong and independent female. Despite this desire, Mica struggles to understand Polish society, its legal mechanisms, and she even finds herself caught in the middle of a Warsaw Ghetto Uprising re-enactment. At this point, her 'personal efforts to avoid predetermined notions regarding the Holocaust and present-day Poland give way to an instinctive identification with the ultimate representation of Jewish victimhood' (Amihay 2017: 191) and she agrees to receive help from Tomasz to navigate Poland. Alongside his job as a tour guide, Tomasz is also a cartoonist at work on a graphic novel about the Warsaw Uprising.

Brygida Gasztold has observed how Modan inverts the typical Holocaust narrative by presenting a community of Poles who all express deep reverence and commitment to preserving the memory of the Holocaust, alongside a group of Israelis who are uninformed about it and are oftentimes anti-Polish. She writes: 'Poles are presented as open-minded and unbiased … [which]

offers a stark contrast to Regina's anti-Polonism' (2017: 146). The effect of this contrast is to highlight 'the shallowness of such generalization when dealing with human emotions' (2017: 146) given the extremity of Modan's usage of hyperbole.

As a non-Jewish Pole, Tomasz plays an important role as a character who could deny or denigrate the experience of the Holocaust in a way that mirrors current Polish legislation and attitudes towards Jews. Instead, Tomasz has chosen to make his living by perpetuating the legacy and memory of the Holocaust by teaching the history of the Warsaw Ghetto to Jews and non-Jews. While Tomasz does profit off of the Holocaust as a tour guide and cartoonist, it is evident that financial remuneration is not his motivator. Beyond the sexual relationship that he forms with Mica, Tomasz invests time to help Regina come to terms with her relationship with Roman and the death of their son and he speaks to her in Polish so that she could privately process her feelings (Figure 1).Tomasz forms relationships with the Jews who come to visit Warsaw, even as he challenges them to consider the city a vibrant one and not only a cemetery where Jews can visit their ancestors. Tomasz rejects the simplistic notion that Jews have no place left in Poland and instead, by leading groups and actively working with Jews, he models a synthesis between past and present that tries to actively reposition Poland as a place where Jews can feel at home.

Figure 1: Tomasz explaining to Mica why he was able to comfort Regina, Modan, *The Property*, 2013. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, p. 139.

Even when Tomasz makes use of Regina's story in his graphic novel – an action that he later recognizes was inappropriate – he makes it clear that he has not appropriated her family's narrative as his own or for the purpose of profit. Conversely, by illustrating a graphic novel about the Polish Warsaw Uprising that includes stories about Jews and not only a Jewish story about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Tomasz models an investment in finding ways to integrate the historical Jewish experience – replete with all of its tragedies – into the larger narrative of Polish history. Significantly, whereas the majority of *The Property* employs a *ligne claire* style in which backgrounds are detailed but individuals are not, Tomasz's history of the Warsaw Uprising is illustrated in a photorealistic style. I see in the enjambment of the contrasting artistic styles an attempt by Modan to lead the reader to recognize that the two graphic novels are very different in nature. Employing Scott McCloud's understanding of how faces can be illustrated, Modan's cartoony employment of *ligne claire* allows the reader to see himself in the characters who are being drawn. Conversely, by illustrating Tomasz's graphic novel in a very realistic style for depicting the history of the Warsaw Uprising, the reader is not able to as easily assume a position that adopts the historical narrative as his own; however, what is gained by the style is an attempt

to depict history as literally and factually as possible (Figure 2). Employed in this way, photorealism is a creative method that is used to reject the narratives told by Holocaust deniers and to serve as a form of visual testimony against those who deny the history of what happened in World War II to both Jews and Poles.

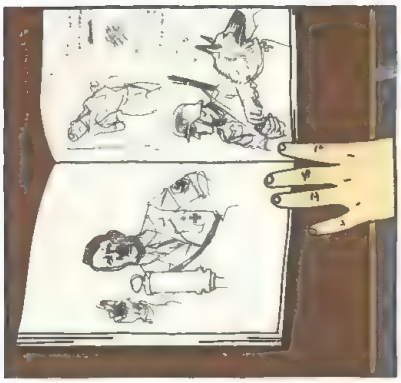

Figure 2: Tomasz's realistic illustration of Hitler contrasted by depiction of his less realistic hand within the same panel, Modan, *The Property*, 2013. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, p. 88.

The character of Tomasz offers Jewish students a model of a non-Jew who is actively engaged in the preservation of national memory and who works to ensure that the legacy of the Holocaust is not forgotten. For while Tomasz never mentions any personal connection to the Holocaust, his concern with the preservation of memory revolves around how Poland remembers and commemorates its past, even the tragic parts. Tomasz's story moves beyond a trivialization of the Holocaust and suggests a model that 'promotes new, intertwined and multifaceted, understandings and deepened genuine relationships that allow for authentic exploration of the past given its relevance in the present' (Reingold 2019b: 177). This model stands in contrast to the ways that anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial are becoming more normative on a global scale.

Introducing Jewish students to Tomasz and the ways that he both personalizes the Holocaust by investing time interacting with Jews and for his commitment to ensuring that the Holocaust is not forgotten as a part of Polish history will likely be surprising to many students because his position is not the normative one of quick, easy and meaningless hashtags. It is a voice that moves slowly and laboriously to recreate the narratives of the past while also suggesting that Poland is a place that Jews should feel safe returning to in order to rebuild their lives. In my own experiences teaching about contemporary Jewish life in Eastern Europe, Israeli and North American Jewish students are shocked to discover that some Jews *want* to live in Poland given the historical and contemporary anti-Semitism. Introducing them to a figure like Tomasz who is invested in the Jewish narrative offers a window into an alternate Poland that is less prominently featured but is an important one for showing students different ways that non-Jews can actively reject the tropes of anti-Semitism and discrimination and instead work towards reconciling past with present on a national level by engaging with all types of Poles, Jews included.

Beyond the character of Tomasz, *The Property* addresses a number of other salient topics that would be of interest to educators who want to encourage their Jewish students to think about

the Holocaust in new ways. Both the opening and closing scenes include a group of Israeli students visiting Poland to tour Holocaust sites on a heritage trip. The trips' emphasis on the past and not the present, however, has led to a growing Polish disdain for the perpetuation of Polish responsibility irrespective of the 70 years that have elapsed since the end of the war (Fanjoy Silver: 2017). Gasztold has noted how in *The Property*, 'the young Israeli visitors ignore present-day Poland and its history after the Holocaust'; as a result, Poland becomes a 'pedagogical instrument in the formation of Jewish identity for young Israelis' (2017: 144-145). Contrasting this type of interaction are the relationships that emerge between Tomasz and Mica and Regina and Roman. Their relationships are non-linear and involve conflict and disagreement; they are real in a way that heritage trips are not. Most importantly, while the characters are clearly impacted by the past, they are also firmly rooted in present-day experiences and expressions of Polish-Jewish relations. Both pairings find ways to simultaneously evoke both the past and present, and through this, lead readers to consider new ways to build relationships between Poles and Jews. Modan's depictions of Tomasz and Mica and Regina and Roman model the types of engagement that the Israeli youth miss out on because "such an encounter might have served as a platform for dialogue, which could help overcome negative stereotypes and counter prejudice" (Gasztold, 2017: 145).

Unlike *The Property* which is a fictional story that is told in third-person, Krug's 2018 graphic novel *Belonging* is a first-person autobiography that chronicles her journey towards understanding her family's Nazi past in order to develop a better connection to her German identity from which she feels untethered because of the Holocaust. Krug's story is a deeply personal one and while it might reflect the experiences of other children and grandchildren of Nazis, she is primarily writing about her own process of discovery.

Krug's emphasis on the historicity of her family's experiences is vividly captured in the mixed-methods artistic style that she employs throughout *Belonging*. Interwoven among the panels about learning that her uncle and her grandfather fought for the Nazis are duplicates of photographs of her family from the Nazi period, family artifacts including school records and anti-Semitic essays that her uncle wrote while in grade school, and copies of archival material that recognized her grandfather as a follower – and not an active member – of the Nazi party. Memory, as modelled in the art form, is non-linear, stop and start, and draws on different elements that coalesce in an attempt to form cohesion. The efficacy of Krug's collage-like technique is that it clearly demarcates to the reader the personal and complex narrative that is her family's story.

It is a testament to Krug's ability as a narrator that she is able to balance her feelings of disappointment and discomfort because her grandfather voluntarily chose to be a Nazi with the reality that he did not actively participate in the murder of Jews. In the way that she writes about her grandfather, Krug rejects the tendency that Harald Welzer has observed in the children and grandchildren of Nazis who deny their relatives' involvement in the atrocities that were committed. He writes that many individuals incorrectly separate their own family members from Nazis, viewing their family members as merely Germans, and not people who participated in any crimes. This type of heroization 'shows how deeply an individual's awareness of history is affected by emotional views of the roles played by close relatives' (Welzer 2011: 180) and it obfuscates one of the more significant features of the Holocaust which is that a civilized

citizenry committed a genocide. Krug actuively struggles with her heritage, lamenting a disconnect with her family and German nationality. Krug's complex relationship with Willi's past can serve as a valuable teaching moment for Jewish students as they can come to recognize how within the Nazi party there were both perpetrators and bystanders. More significantly, studying Krug's discomfort over her grandfather's past – even if he was a bystander – models for Jewish students how non-Jews struggle with how to synthesize their personal and familial experiences with the truth that their grandparents were tacitly complicit in genocide.

The heroization that Welzer refers to is present in Krug's work when her mother and her aunt struggle to accept that their father was a Nazi, preferring to not be made aware of any specific details. Krug (2018) accepts her aunt's desire to not fully confront the truth, commenting that 'everyone has just one father'. And yet directly interwoven with her family's desire to remain ignorant about the past is Krug's realization that the ways in which her family's story have been hidden have hindered her ability to form a meaningful relationship with her German identity and resulted in 'feelings of shame about herself and [led to] her feelings of homelessness' (Reingold 2019a).

Krug's search for the truth – even when it involves sharing unpleasant details with her Jewish husband – models the type of authentic self-exploration that effective humanities and social studies curricula can offer. What Krug comes to accept is that by synthesizing her family's dark history into her own life's story, she is able to 'develop a stronger and more nuanced relationship with her identity' (Reingold 2019a). Where students might struggle with Krug's text is the ways that she shares positive details about her family members, presenting them as human and relatable despite having fought for Hitler. Yet even as Krug shares that she sympathizes with her grandfather's post-war struggles to find employment because he was a Nazi, she equally recognizes that he was also a witness to attacks on Jews and their property and that he did not speak out against the violence. This honesty reaffirms her refusal to equate Jewish and German suffering. Krug is relegated to an uncomfortable position because she can neither fully accept nor fully reject her grandfather. While she wonders whether it would 'be easier to navigate [her] shame if [she] had been able to prove his guilt, if [she] had learned that he had been a Nazi through and through without the shadow of a doubt' (Krug 2018), Krug knows that this is not her family's story. Instead, Krug models the impossibility of ever knowing the full story of her family's past while showing the reader the importance of partial stories – even when they are uncomfortable – as a way for rebuilding a family in the shadow of the Holocaust.

Within *Belonging*, Krug does not apologize for the role that her family or nation played in the Holocaust. Despite this the text provides many important entry points for educators to facilitate conversations about the ways that the legacy of the Holocaust has been commemorated and remembered in Germany and elsewhere amongst non-Jews. Irrespective an apology, Krug clearly feels shameful for her grandparents' actions. This tension raises important questions about the legacy of the Holocaust and posthumous guilt for the children of perpetrators. Through the act of chronicling her family's narrative, Krug suggests that while she cannot apologize for the past, neither is she absolved from learning about it and, where possible, repairing relationships. This understanding of posthumous responsibility for remembering is evident early in the text when she dismissive of the ways that she learned about the Holocaust in school as an event that was taught but not discussed. She remembers feeling afraid to ask questions which led

to feeling shame and collective guilt over the past but not understanding why. Posthumous responsibility is evidenced in the process that Krug undertakes to both learn about the past and to confront family members who choose to remain willfully ignorant of it. Through this process, Krug comes to recognize the myriad ways that her family has been shaped by her grandparents' complicity in the Holocaust. The impact of the Holocaust on her family is in no way comparable to the impact on Jewish families; however, as a descendent with no obligation to bear responsibility, Krug actively tries to confront the past and bring it forward, much to her own shame. Introducing Jewish students to a non-Jewish German who experienced loss in the Holocaust is neither useful nor would it be appreciated given the role German played in perpetrating the Holocaust. Instead, what Krug offers through her narrative is an opportunity to learn about contemporary Germans who are willing to risk their familial relationships in order to uncover the past; through this, students can come to recognize the importance of learning their own histories, no matter how painful, and to see that there are non-Jews who are actively investigating the past and seeking to learn lessons from it.

Even though Krug does not directly address Jews, her graphic novel clearly demonstrates complex thinking about the Holocaust and the ways that the Holocaust continues to affect subsequent generations, including the descendants of perpetrators. What Krug's exploration is able to show a group of Jewish students is a side to the Holocaust that is less discussed – how the children of perpetrators needed to navigate their own feelings of shame over what their family did. Through her exploration, Krug shows her audience that 'it is possible to reconcile past with present in a way that enhances familial feelings' (Reingold 2019a) while doing so in a way that actively investigates the willful blindness that her family members have adopted. Krug argues that the intentional obfuscation of the past is what has contributed to her feelings of homelessness and rootlessness; confronting the past not only rebuilds relationships with her family but also allows her to reclaim her identity. The correlation between history and identity is significant for it shows that it is possible to bridge the chasm that can exist between generations affected by the shadow of genocide and shows that non-Jews must also learn how to grapple with the past in order to be better capable of navigating the present.

In response to Felix Klein's cautioning against wearing religious head coverings in some public spaces in Germany, the German tabloid Bild published a cut-out kippah on its front page, encouraging non-Jewish Germans to show solidarity with fellow Jews by wearing it (Guy 2019). While cute, it is a shallow response given the seriousness of the situation and the associated fears that Jews have with regards to safety and security. What both *The Property* and *Belonging* effectively do is to involve the non-Jewish voice in helping to ensure that the legacy, memory, and impact of the Holocaust is not forgotten. Both Tomasz and Krug – in very different ways – lead students to consider how the Holocaust is also a topic of relevance to non-Jews. Unlike the models of Holocaust education which promote universalization over specificity, Tomasz and Krug eschew platitudes like 'never again' and instead encourage the Jewish reader to become attuned to the idea that to effectively combat the rise of anti-Semitism involves partnering with non-Jews who model thoughtful ways of navigating the legacy of trauma as it has reverberated throughout the over 70 years since the end of the Holocaust. This type of education is one that recognizes that in a world of increasing Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism, the voices of non-Jews who testify to its veracity are essential in combatting apathy and anti-Semitism.

The two graphic novels also involve a reconceptualization around ownership of Holocaust stories. In her essay about a French Holocaust graphic novel about and by Jews, Gorrara (2019: 123) wrote that the text

> helps us to rethink generation as the determining paradigm for the transmission of post-war Holocaust memories … There is no one single experience of living as a Jew in wartime and post-war Poland and France and there are varied and differentiated post-Holocaust Jewish identities and trajectories.

With Tomasz and Krug, the Holocaust is shown to be an event in which stories can be shared and explored by non-Jews, and not only by Jews. While destabilizing the notions of ownership of the Holocaust by expanding the boundaries to include non-Jews, it reinforces an understanding that remaining entrenched in a legacy in which Jews are victims and non-Jews are only perpetrators is no longer reflective of the complex ways that the Holocaust has permeated non-Jewish society. Challenging Jewish students to reconsider what a Holocaust narrative is – by situating the story primarily in the present and not in the past – and also by prominently featuring non-Jews, forces Jewish students to think about the Holocaust in broader ways and to recognize that its impact, while primarily felt within their own community, extends well beyond it.

Both Tomasz and Krug are highly developed and complex characters who demonstrate traits and behaviours which might simultaneously anger and please the reader. What is most evident though is that their engagement with the Holocaust is three dimensional and multifaceted. Both characters show the significance of struggling and grappling with their own national and familial complicity, and more importantly, with what to do in the present as non-Jews living in the pale of the Holocaust. What results for the Jewish student is an opportunity to gain access to a world in which non-Jews are absorbed by Jewish history as part of their own familial and national histories. The exposure to voices which expands the types of existing Holocaust curricula can be used to introduce Jewish students to new ways of thinking about history and the place of the Jew in global history. Like Tomasz's graphic novel about Poland which tries to integrate Jews into Polish history, seeing that their stories are relevant to non-Jews can foster a reciprocal relationship that encourages Jewish students to explore communities and cultures outside of their own, and begin a process of greater reconciliation and mutual trust alongside non-Jews in order to combat racism and anti-Semitism in all of its permutations.

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